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ABSTRACT

This report examines limits on access to education in Australia. Accessibility must be available without discrimination because of physical or economic limitations. Chapters are devoted to nine different types of limited accessibility, affecting: children with disabilities, especially in remote areas without alternative local schools; children isolated from public transport or denied access to school buses; students studying by distance education who are dependent on unreliable power sources or inadequate or very expensive telecommunications infrastructure; Indigenous children in Homeland Centres and remote communities without schools, teachers, or tutors to supervise distance education; Indigenous teenagers with no accessible secondary school curriculum; non-English-speaking children whose curriculum is in English; students in vocational programs who cannot find work experience placements locally and who cannot afford the costs involved in placements away from home; teenagers whose only chance of a secondary education is a boarding school at risk of losing its subsidies; and schools trying to use computers and the Internet where the telecommunications infrastructure is inadequate. The report uses a combination of case studies, evidence submitted to the National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education, and information about government programs to illustrate the limits presented. It concludes each chapter with recommendations on how to address these limits. A map of each state and territory shows junior and senior secondary school locations and school-aged populations. (Contains 39 references.) (TD)

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"Education Access"

National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education

Fabienne Balsamo with David Robinson

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Acronyms and definitions

ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics

AIC - Assistance for Isolated Children (federal income support provision)

AIEW - Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker

AP Lands - Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands (northern South Australia)

AQF - Australian Qualifications Framework

ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder - described briefly on page 22

ASSPA - Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (DETYA funding program)

ATSIC - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (elected national representative body)

Balanda - term used to describe Australians of European descent, particularly in the NT (see also Kartiya)

CAAMA - Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association

CAP - Country Areas Program (DETYA funding program; known as Priority Country Area Program - PCAP - in Queensland)

CDEP - Community Development Employment Projects

CEC - Community Education Centre

DDA - *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)

DET - Department of Education and Training (NSW)

DETE - Department of Education, Training and Employment (South Australia)

DETYA - Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Cth)

DOE - Department of Education; now Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET Victoria)

EdNA - Education Network Australia

Education providers are the authorities directly responsible for the organisation, funding and provision of schools. They are principally State and Territory education departments and Catholic Education Commissions and Offices. Others include the Board of Lutheran Schools

EDWA - Education Department of Western Australia

ESL - English as a Second Language

HREOC - Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

ICPA - Isolated Children's Parents' Association

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IESIP - Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (DETYA funding program)

ISA - Inclusion Support Assistant

ISDN - Integrated Services Digital Network

IT - Information Technology

ISP - Internet Service Provider

Kartiya - term used to describe Australian of European descent, particularly in the Kimberley region (see also Balanda)

Kbps - Kilobits per second (transmission speed)

LAN - Local Area Network

LOTE - Languages Other Than English (a Key Learning Area)

MCEETYA - Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

MCS - Murrupurtinyanuwa Community School

NCVER - National Centre of Vocational Education Research

P&C - Parents' and Citizens' Association (attached to individual schools; also Parents' and Friends)

R&D - Research and Development

SACE - South Australian Certificate of Education

Salamanca Statement adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in June 1994; concludes that students with special educational needs must have access to mainstream schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting their needs: www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

School communities - A school community is the group of people focused on and participating in education in a school or town. Members include students and their parents, teachers, para-professionals and auxiliary staff, P&C or P&F members and often other members of the town community

TAFE - Technical and Further Education

USO - Universal Service Obligation

VCE - Victorian Certificate of Education

VET - Vocational Education and Training

YRC - Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne (conducted a scoping survey for the inquiry)

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1 Introduction

Education is fundamental to the development of human potential and to full participation in a democratic society. That is why it is recognised as a human right for every child. It is also why it is compulsory in Australia for every child to attend primary school from the age of 6 and secondary school until 15 (16 in Tasmania). Yet some children have no access to formal education or to an essential component of education or experience restrictions on their access to education. This report describes the nature and circumstances of these children's experience.

Education is a human right

Australia has recognised the right of everyone to education and undertaken to make primary and secondary education available to all (*Convention on the Rights of the Child* article 28 and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* article 13). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has pointed out that, to satisfy this undertaking, education must be available, accessible including affordable, acceptable and adaptable.

'Availability' means that 'functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity.'

*What they require to function depends upon numerous factors, including the developmental context within which they operate; for example, all institutions and programmes are likely to require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on; while some will also require facilities such as a library, computer facilities and information technology (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 13 (1999), paragraph 6 *).*

* The text of this General Comment and all Convention articles referred to is set out in full in the companion report, *Recommendations*, Appendix 4.

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'Accessibility' has three dimensions. It must be available to all without discrimination, in law and in fact, physically accessible and economically accessible. The Committee requires education to be 'within safe physical reach, either by attendance at some reasonably convenient geographic location (e.g. a neighbourhood school) or via modern technology (e.g. access to a "distance learning" programme)' (*General Comment No. 13*, paragraph 6). Education must also be affordable to all.

According to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* article 23, children with disabilities have the right to all the support necessary to become as self-reliant as possible. Article 23.1 provides

States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Article 23.3 requires that children with disabilities be ensured access to education.

Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance ... shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

Australian law, however, does not recognise the right to education except in NSW. The *NSW Education Act 1990* provides, in section 4

In enacting this Act, Parliament has had regard to the following principles:

(a) every child has the right to receive an education.

(b) the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents.

(c) it is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality.

(d) the principal responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education.

Limits on access

Access to education is compromised by ill-health, disability, poverty, isolation, high mobility and transience, natural events such as floods and even heavy rain. It is denied by remoteness coupled with the language and cultural inappropriateness of the instruction on

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offer for hundreds of Indigenous children.

Currently, many Australian Aboriginal children are denied access to successful classroom learning for a number of reasons. Two major sources of disadvantage include:

- *the cultural, linguistic and sociolinguistic differences between many of the teachers and the children*
- *the extremely high prevalence of conductive hearing loss due to otitis media (middle ear infection) which can adversely affect cognitive, linguistic and social development (Dr Anne Lovell submission, page 1).*

This report uses a combination of case study examples, evidence to the inquiry and information about government programs including education-related subsidies to illustrate the limits on access to education which face

- children with disabilities, especially in remote communities and rural areas where there is little or no choice of alternative local schools
- children isolated from public transport routes or denied access to school buses supplied or subsidised by government
- children studying by distance education whose radio or computer connections are dependent on unreliable power sources or inadequate or very expensive telecommunications infrastructure
- Indigenous children in Homeland Centres and outstation communities without schools, teachers or tutors to supervise distance education
- Indigenous teenagers with no accessible secondary school curriculum
- Indigenous and non-English speaking children whose only curriculum is in a language which they have never heard spoken at home - English
- teenagers participating in a Vocational Education and Training curriculum who cannot find work experience placements in their community or town and who cannot afford the travel and accommodation costs involved in placements away from home
- teenagers whose only real chance of a satisfactory secondary education is to board at a school term hostel which is at risk of losing its subsidies
- schools trying to offer a contemporary curriculum using computers and the Internet where the IT infrastructure is inadequate for the purpose and where repairs can take an entire term to effect.

The State and Territory maps on pages 109 -121 show the distribution of senior secondary schools. Completion of Year 12 is incontestably required now for fulfilment of a basic education - whether in an academic or a vocational stream. In the NT even a junior secondary curriculum is available only in the larger urban centres. In Tasmania senior secondary schooling is available only in the larger urban centres at secondary colleges.

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The traditional emphasis on the compulsory nature of education has allowed governments to provide a monocultural education system that every child is required to attend. Education has not accommodated difference well and has not reached out sufficiently to children as individuals. In the country as in the city, education choice is often between a government and a Catholic primary school. The inquiry was disturbed to find extensive de facto racial segregation in which one of the local schools (typically the Catholic primary school in the Kimberley region of WA but the government primary school in north-west NSW) enrols predominantly Indigenous students while the other is the school of choice for local white families. For rural families education 'choice' at the secondary level has traditionally been secured by the option of capital city boarding schools. The expense of this option has always excluded many.

An emphasis on education as a right will require governments to fashion teaching and learning for children as individuals, taking into account all of their circumstances. Educationalists have long emphasised this and many programs have been piloted and implemented. They include bilingual education programs in 12 government schools in the Northern Territory and government funding support for 14 Aboriginal independent community schools in WA. They also include provision of special education teachers and aides to support the integration of students with disabilities. Isolation is mitigated to some extent by the Commonwealth's Assistance for Isolated Children with its Distance Education Allowance, Boarding Allowance and Second Home Allowance options. For country schools there is the Commonwealth's excellent Country Areas Program (CAP) which distributes $17.7 million among 5% of Australian schools to assist almost 165,000 students. All States and Territories subsidise school transport to some extent.

More is needed to ensure access to education for every Australian child. In its *Recommendations* report, the inquiry has made 73 recommendations to this end, many of which are reprinted in this report.

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2 Transport

Transport is a key determinant of access to education. The form of transport, the amount of time taken for travel and the cost involved can all have a significant impact on school education. Many children in rural and remote parts of Australia travel to and from school in extreme conditions due to distance, road quality and climate. Along with flooding, heat and dust are common impediments to travel in rural and remote regions.

Buses are expensive, I accept all of that, but it's a critical part of the access that students need to reach their school's in areas like this. (Dick Cuttle, Executive of the Area School Principals' Association, Port Lincoln SA hearing).

Many Australian communities are accessible only by air and there are some which can be reached only by sea. School transport policy and funding for schools is most commonly based on per-kilometre road travel. Schools and families in remote locations struggle with the costs of travel for any school-related activity. Often these activities are very limited if they occur at all.

Drawn by Jack Balgamo

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Mungindi, NSW

From Felicity Moen, Director, Mungindi Community Pre-School.

I write to you as the director of a preschool in a rural, isolated town. Mungindi has a population of 1,000 people and is situated in the north west of NSW. I have been working and living in Mungindi for three years and I have seen first hand the isolation the families of this community must endure. We are isolated as the town is situated more than 100 kilometres from a major centre. We are further isolated by the poor state of the roads. To the closest major centre, the road is partly gravel and becomes virtually inaccessible in the wet weather.

The isolation leads to many disadvantages for our children. The lack of sealed roads means that some children cannot attend school for weeks if we have rain. Many children miss days from school even when we have light rain. This is not equality in education. Preschool, primary and secondary education should be available and accessible to all children regardless of where they live. I do not believe this happens in rural and remote areas of Australia. This is denying children their rights and their needs, which includes their social, emotional and intellectual development. Imagine if a child in the city could not attend their school, play with their friends, learn and grow as individuals because of the state of the road on which they lived. The problem would be dealt with immediately.

Why then are the children of Mungindi and other rural, isolated communities denied their equal rights? One of the basic rights of the child is access and availability to education. Our children are denied this and are therefore not experiencing the equality they are entitled to and deserve.

From Vicki Murphy, Mungindi.

For our family with three primary school aged students and one preschool child, wet weather means a 40 kilometre drive twice a day in very sloppy, dangerous, muddy conditions. The option is to stay home. Where is the education in that? Travel subsidy does not cover this situation, let alone the wear and tear on vehicles in these terrible conditions. Is this equitable?

An example of other difficulties experienced in north-west NSW was children travelling to athletic carnivals for their diocesan carnival held in Inverell. People from Walgett travelled over four hours on Thursday for the carnival on Friday only to be washed out on Thursday evening. The school - bus, cars, parents and children - travelled home [again and then we were] informed that the event was rescheduled for the following Monday. There was no time to reorganise buses, cars, parents and children and so the children missed the

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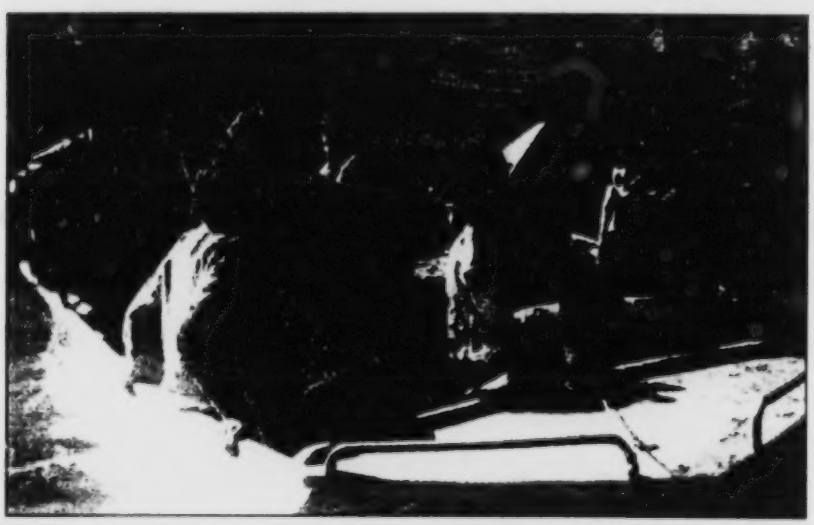
event and the opportunity to go on to the next level of competition.

From Kelly and Clarrie Doyle, Mungindi.

. . . accessibility to school is our greatest concern. We have been blessed with a school bus which picks our children up only several kilometres away. However, due to the appalling conditions of the road, due to neglect, rainfall of thirty points prevents the bus continuing its journey to our bus stop.

This, for my family, means a combined distance travel of 128 kilometres a day usually for 1-2 days [after the rain] but if the rain exceeds this it could be several more days. Should there be substantial rain greater than two inches our children are unable to attend school for prolonged periods and need to be educated at home.

Undoubtedly, this brings me to a very critical matter being the unattainable resources required to teach children at home on short notice, not to mention long term absence regardless of reason such as flood, isolation or illness. Perhaps an achievable solution to this problem is to combine a local/regional committee including voluntary teachers and parents, to formulate the required home-study packages categorised to each level of education, term by term and making them obtainable by parents. These could be constructed so they may be returned and recycled for next time. Alternatively, for some families a practical option may be the facilities to link up with the School of the Air.



Boating to school during floods in Mungindi NSW.

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From Margaret Francisco, Mungindi school bus operator.

We are the owner-drivers of the Mungindi school bus runs.

There are times we just cannot do our full distance on either of the runs because our roads are not able to be travelled on unless you have a four wheel drive vehicle.

When it rains 20 to 30 points I am not able to move off the main road and let me tell you, sometimes the main road is not too good either.

The only way the children can get to school is for the parents to meet the bus and this means that their road or track gets cut up very badly as there are four families four times a day up and down that road without any extra traffic. I am at the moment talking about the Currigundi road off the Mungindi-Moree road.

I can only go as far as Weemelah in the wet weather which is not quite half the distance. I have to again travel across a very wet, slushy, slippery and boggy track which can be quite dangerous to reach the Boomi-Mungindi road which is nearly as bad as the one I have described. So therefore, the six families on the Boomi road have to take their children into school or they miss another day of school.

From Sally Prosser, Unit Controller, State Emergency Service, Mungindi.

I have been Unit Controller of the Mungindi State Emergency Service since 1991 and in the years since I have had the responsibility of monitoring and resupplying Mungindi and surrounding districts in such natural disasters as storm, tempest and floods, which have been numerous.

In 1998 alone, Mungindi was isolated for approximately two months with some children attending school for one day out of term three. These children did have homework faxed to them (those lucky enough to have fax machines) but obviously they missed out on a lot of 'hands on' education.

During this same period we were also boating between 6-12 school children and several teachers to school. Needless to say, these people were often travelling in the dark either end in order to compensate for the slow mode of travel. The younger children in particular were finding school very difficult due to extreme tiredness.

These children, and many, many others on any flood plain throughout this district and indeed Australia will again suffer through many more floods to come, but it would be nice to think that with a little more planning and forethought, things could be a little easier in the future.

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From Helen Officer, Boomi.

Children with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged in isolated rural areas. Generally there is a lack of any services for these children, and when they are available there is a lack of continuity due to piecemeal funding. This makes it difficult to attract professional staff.

To access services, parents have to travel very long distances over appalling roads with no public transport available. The cost in time and money is considerable. Parents also suffer the distress of knowing their child needs help and being unable to provide it.

Frequently children with disabilities need help in several areas such as speech therapy, occupational and physiotherapy, special education, hearing and sight impairment. Much better results are achieved with a coordinated approach. Funding for children with disabilities should include provision for equipment and travel. Professional staff cannot be encouraged to remote areas without some recognition in salary packages of the cost in vehicle wear and tear of rough roads and long distances.

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Other School Transport Issues

Travel conditions

My children leave home at 7.30 in the morning to catch the school bus and some kids don't get off the bus until 5.30 at night. We know that we can't change the times these kids are on the bus but we believe that there should be greater consideration of children's comfort when you are looking at the climate conditions. Last week it was minus 5 degrees in the morning for winter, and we have possibly 2 to 3 weeks of between 40 to 47 degrees heat.

Parents are asking for a reduction of noise levels on the bus, two children to a seat instead of three, adequate space for school bags and air conditioning on the buses. We had to fight to get off-road tyres on the buses as a trial. Some of the roads we have to drive on are atrocious. Metropolitan people would be surprised we have to do it. Yet we have to fight to get simple tyres let alone air conditioning' (Wudinna SA public meeting).

Travel times

School bus transport was a concern for many of the 3,128 respondents to the Youth Research Centre survey conducted for the inquiry.

Significant numbers of parents identified the time spent on buses as a major issue.

In some cases this time was simply due to the distances to travel and the number of pick ups on the route, but in other cases the time taken was related to the condition of the roads: dirt and gravel roads greatly increased the travel time.

[T]here was a problem with access to suitable bus routes and with the length of time students spent on buses (times of up to almost four hours per day were reported).

Teachers and parents commented on the impact of the wet season in Northern Australia which restricts access to

Parent identification of buses as an issue - by State/Territory

	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
Living on farm or station	24%		20%	14%	50%	20%*	19%
Living in a community of under 10,000 people	10%ß	-	5%ß	6%ß	1%	-	-

* only mentioned in respect of disabled students

ß all secondary students

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schools when the roads become impassable, students can miss many days of school. (This was also a problem for some respondents in New South Wales.) For some remote communities, the only way in and out in the wet season is by air which is very costly and restricts access to the community for outside resources.

When students had to travel any distance on buses, however, it restricted the provision of and their participation in after school activities, such as sport and music. Travel of substantial distances was reported to have a serious effect on the time available for homework.

Some parents commented on the distances that they themselves had to travel to access the school bus. They were concerned that busing formulas disadvantaged children from larger properties. For example, parents from Queensland reported that the distance that a bus would travel from a school in Queensland is in part determined by the number of children to collect. Respondents in areas with large properties found it more difficult to achieve the numbers required to have the bus drive close enough to their properties. As a result, someone - usually a parent - was required to spend several hours a day taking the children to and from the bus pick-up point (YRC Survey, pages 26-28).

Timetables

I think it's the feeling of a lot of parents that the timetables are drawn up to suit the bus contractors and not necessarily the students. Certainly students are disadvantaged in terms of their school day being a lot longer based on how long it takes them to get home and when the contractors will take them, which in some cases is quite significant. It adds a lot to a day (Susan Rockliff, Tasmanian Council of State Schools Parents and Friends, Hobart hearing).

Daily time spent travelling as reported by students

	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
< 30 mins	67%	61%	69%	67%	65%	71%	53%
30 - 39 mins	9%	14%	7%	12%	19%	9%	11%
40 - 49 mins	4%	2%	7%	8%	5%	8%	5%
50 - 59 mins	4%	2%	0%	0%	5%	1%	4%
1 - 1.5 hours	6%	0%	7%	6%	6%	6%	10%
> 1.5 hours	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	3%

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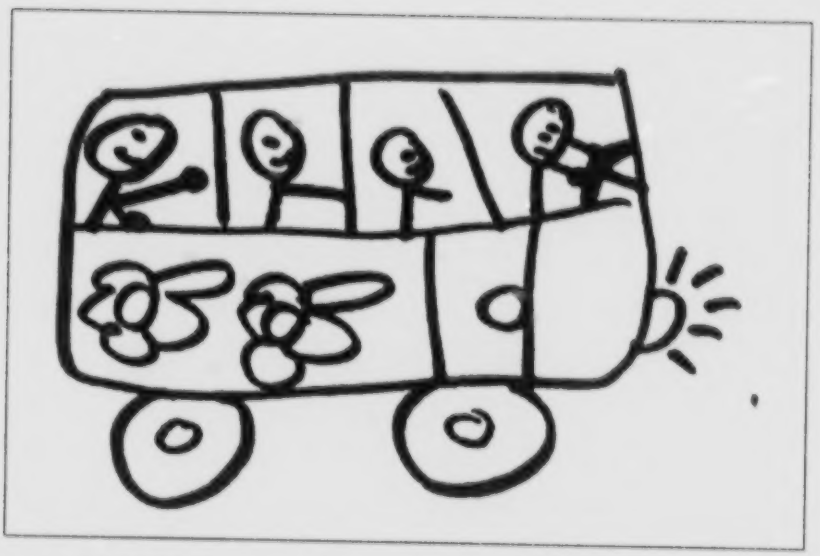

Detail from a poster drawn for the inquiry by Port Lincoln Primary School students

There are children who live about 3 to 4 kilometres from town. The bus service is privatised in Hedland and it is scheduled to fit in with the movement of BHP employees. These times do not always suit the school children. If the children miss the bus, there are serious weather considerations if they are to walk to school. Extreme heat and rain are a disincentive for children to attend school (public meeting in South Hedland WA)

Bus safety

[Of] the current government bus fleet, only three are air-conditioned and that's on a trial. The majority are not, and if you look at Eyre Peninsula in particular, some temperatures can be 50 degrees or so when the kids are on those buses ... there are kids travelling 68 kilometres on the bus, having been brought 20 kilometres plus to the bus stop by their parents. So that means 68 kilometres in one of those buses is a minimum of an hour, maybe a bit longer depending on the road conditions and so on, and then back at night ... If the kids have got to travel, and we accept the fact that if we live out there we've got to travel, but at least the conditions should be reasonable ... Health issues in terms of dust and asthma and all of those sort of things are just made worse in addition to the heat, the cold or whatever it might be (Dick Cuttle, Executive of the Area School Principals' Association, Port Lincoln SA hearing)

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In Wudinna South Australia parents raised safety concerns related to the number of children on the bus bench seats: students are travelling three to a seat on benches designed for two. Wudinna children are among many in Australia who travel without seatbelts on unsealed roads with the added dangers of large grain trucks and numerous kangaroos (Wudinna SA public meeting)

Road conditions

Numerous submissions to the inquiry refer to poor road conditions creating long and dangerous trips to and from school. Unsealed roads deteriorate quickly and require constant maintenance.

There is no way we can take our children to mix with others there because of the appalling standard of the roads. Where the area is isolated and there are few families, Local Government ignores their plight. Local Governments see isolated families as a nuisance and refuse to maintain the roads in a reasonable fashion. We need a controlling body to inspect the communication channel - the main road to ensure isolated children can mix occasionally. We are not asking for a highway, just a basic reasonable surface (Grahame and Lynda Code, Aberfeldy Vic, submission)

We now travel 8 kilometres on an atrocious road where once again nobody seems to care. Both families along our road have asked for the road to be graded and we were told that the grader is in the district and it will be done next week. That was nearly three weeks ago.

The problem with our road is that there is so much gravel built up in the middle of the road that we now have to drive in the table drain to get to the main road. We feel our road is now getting too dangerous and we will have to keep our children home if this is not rectified immediately.

We have to wonder why roads in rural communities are not graded ready for the new school terms. Is this not something that can be arranged? (Christina and Wayne Morris, Naradhan NSW, submission)

Equity of access

For some rural students, government school bus transport may be the only 'public' transport option. Some students, however, are not always entitled to use school buses supplied or subsidised by governments: some non-government school students, pre-school children and TAFE students. In Victoria for example, in 1999, children attending non-government schools could not be guaranteed a place on the government school bus. The provision of a bus route depends on a minimum of 15 government school students living at a distance of at least 4.8 kilometres from the nearest government school. Non-government

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school students are entitled to use this service if there are places on the bus but they are not included in the calculation for provision of the service. Where there are insufficient places on the government school bus, Victorian non-government students are entitled to a conveyance allowance (see Table on page 18).

The access for non-government students has been limited or removed, which means that the students that are coming to Mount Lilydale or even to government schools in the Lilydale area that pass by a local government school, will not be given access to the school bus down to Lilydale any more (Maggie Westlake, Melbourne hearing).

There's also the issue of pre-school and kindy kids. They are expected to be, and are encouraged by the Government to be there and yet there is no provision made in terms of the bus. If there is room they can fit on. If there is not room then they don't (Ian Bailie, Cleve Area School Principal, Port Lincoln SA hearing).

Currently in all jurisdictions pre-school children are not entitled to access government subsidised school bus transport. Many do, but only thanks to the goodwill of the driver and the transport company. For many young children a lack of transport means access to pre-school is denied.

At present preschool bus travellers are unofficial, and therefore invisible to the powers that regulate bus travel, namely the Department of Transport ... In a community like ours where services are restricted, bus travel is essential for rural children to access preschool services ... The situation is unsafe and discriminatory to preschool children (Berrigan Children's Centre Association NSW submission).

TAFE students are also not entitled to access subsidised school bus transport although some do so at the discretion of the driver and the carrier.

One of the problems that we have got in TAFE is transport. There is no travel assistance whatsoever for the lads who come from Rosebery. They travel to the Zeehan turn-off where they are back-loaded onto a school bus both ways which they have to pay full costs for and I think it costs them about $50 per week. This is probably not 100% legal but it is the only way.

At the school we have students coming from Zeehan. There are more students than will fit into one bus so we have got two buses but one of them is half empty so the TAFE students can travel in that bus with the school students.

The school bus is a privately run bus and that is why the students pay $50 each week. If they lived on the North West Coast they could get a students' pass for travel and it would cost them $3 per week. Here they can't get anything

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Last year a lot of the parents sent the TAFE students away because it was cheaper to have them board rather than pay the cost of transport to take them to the West Coast TAFE (Queenstown Tas public meeting).

Transport costs

While in principle education should be available free of charge to children in Australia, there are in reality some considerable costs involved. The cost of transport was of concern to respondents to the 1999 Youth Research Centre (YRC) survey.

Access to schools for many respondents required some period of travel, which was either provided by the parents or by a school bus. As well as the constraints placed on various aspects of education by such travel, there were often significant costs associated with this travel.

'If you are not very financial, you can send your child on the bus to the school 50 kilometres away. Otherwise you have to pay for boarding' (WA parent quoted in YRC Survey, page 25).

Cost effective transport options are limited if the local school is a considerable distance from the family home. If the child is sent to boarding school or a school term hostel, the costs of transporting children home on holidays is usually borne by the families (except in WA where there is a government subsidy). If the child is educated 'locally', the child and a parent may spend many hours each day travelling to and from school. Both options have economic implications for the family.

For parents who travel more than 5 kilometres to the bus stop, or whatever it might be, there's an allowance paid to them and I think it works out on average something like 14c per km. Now 14c in this day and age for people ... In my case, we've got people driving 20 kilometres into the stop to drop the kids off, 20 kilometres back and doing that [again] at night. They're travelling 80 kilometres a day, which is a huge commitment for those kids, and really the allowance the Government makes for that doesn't even pay the running costs and in many cases the fuel costs, let alone the running costs of those vehicles (Chris Deslandes, Cummins Area School Principal, Port Lincoln SA hearing).

The cost of transport deters some students and their families from continuing at school.

One low income family with several children said they could not afford the petrol money to travel each day to the nearest bus stop - 20km, so their teenage son did not attend high school. He received distance education material, but

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Parent and teacher identification of excursion costs as an issue

	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
School in a community of under 10,000 people	25%	27%	27%	29%	31%	32%	25%

his parents did not have sufficient education themselves to assist him. They had no phone, so he could not access phone support. The parents were attempting to educate the younger children themselves. A number of families with young children did not send them to school due to the bus travel time, and the condition of the roads. This would mean young children leaving home at 7am and getting home at 5pm, and they felt this was too much for their age (Maurine Gibson, Maryborough Qld, submission).

Another cost for families is that of school excursions. In the YRC survey school excursion costs were identified as a major issue by significant proportions of parents in communities under 10,000 people in every State and the NT.

In South Australia, in a small community of under 1000 people, 80 kilometres from a rural centre, the primary school was not able to gain access to the local school bus for excursions because the cost was calculated by the kilometre. The Country Areas Program (CAP) bus was available only half of the year as it was shared between schools.

'We live on an island. The school subsidises part of the cost but we pay $60 for every excursion off the island' (Tasmanian parent).

'There is difficulty and expense in arranging excursions, most excursions involve a lot of travelling' (NSW teacher quoted in YRC Survey, page 26).

The Commonwealth Country Areas Program provides schools with some funding to cover the costs of sporting, social and cultural experiences. Most schools must also fundraise to meet the costs of student travel for excursions. The costs can be considerable when airfares and overnight accommodation are necessary. Such costs are substantially borne by parents.

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Transport subsidies

Jurisdiction	Eligibility Criteria	Subsidy
NSW: Department of Transport	Primary students 1.6kms and secondary students 2kms to nearest school or bus stop	Free school bus pass
	Students with special needs	Contract transport arrangement negotiated through the school
	Students with no public transport options who travel more than 1.6kms primary or 2.3kms secondary to bus stop or school	Private Vehicle Conveyance subsidy > 1.6kms 44 cents/day 1.7-8.0kms $2.57/day 8.1-16.0kms $5.13/day 16.1-24.0kms $7.72/day 24.1-32.0kms $10.28/day Continuing in 8km brackets
NT: Department of Education	More than 5 kilometres from nearest appropriate school, government or private	Free bus pass
	More than 5 kilometres from nearest school and nearest point of public transport	Conveyance allowance of 21 cents per kilometre to a maximum 200kms per day
	Students with special needs	Free bus service
Qld: Department of Education	Nearest government school from the family home is 3.2kms for a primary student or 4.8kms for a secondary student. Students from families on low incomes may also be eligible for transport subsidies even if they do not meet the distance criteria	Free bus transport
	Students meeting certain special needs criteria (ie disability)	Free bus or contracted service
	Students without bus services	Conveyance allowance at approx .3 cents per kilometre
SA: Department of Education	Country students	Either free bus transport on government owned buses or Private Bus Allowance providing the reimbursement of bus fares
	Students with special needs	Contracted transport services
	Students without bus services or public transport who travel a minimum of 5kms to nearest school or public transport	Car Allowance: 15.3 cents per kilometre
Tas: Department of Education	Country students; no distance criteria	Free bus transport in some areas

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	No bus route or no transport available in country area	30 cents to 70 cents per trip depending on the contractor
	Journey of over 5kms one way or 10kms return	Conveyance allowance of 8 cents per kilometre
Vic: Department of Education	At least 15 government students in non-metro areas at a distance of at least 4.8 from nearest government school	Free bus transport provided by the Department of Infrastructure
	Students without bus services who meet the distance criteria	Annual Conveyance allowance of $300 for both primary & secondary students paid to school for disbursement
	Students with disabilities on a case by case basis	Contracted services
WA: Department of Transport	Unable to travel to school on a daily basis, living in a Defined Remote Area and relocating for school	4 free return trips annually between Perth and home (air, bus or rail)
	Unable to travel to school on a daily basis, living elsewhere in the State than a Defined Remote Area, relocating for school and the normal student discounted fare exceeds $37.72 from school to home	4 return fares annually, limited to the cost of appropriate rail or bus travel
	Students transported more than 56 kilometres to nearest government school on public transport	Road Travel Subsidy (RTS) of 15.7 cents per kilometre
	Students with special needs	Contracted transport services

HREOC Recommendations

Education must be 'within safe physical reach' under human rights law. Safety and the reasonableness of student travel times are key concerns in our recommendations. Equity of access is another.

Recommendation 5.18a: All education providers should provide targeted funds to schools for the provision of 'flood packs' for primary and secondary students in schools affected by floods or adverse weather and road conditions. These 'flood packs' should contain learning materials similar to those distributed through distance education.

Recommendation 5.18b: All education providers should further subsidise local schools to establish and maintain effective telephone links with students temporarily isolated for any reason.

Recommendation 6.1: Each education department should conduct or

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commission an audit of all school transport provision with attention to issues of safety and access and evaluate that provision by reference to the right of children to safe and ready access to education. Measures taken to enhance access, safety and convenience may need to include

- introduction of new transport services
- re-routing of existing services
- fitting of seat belts
- better temperature control to heat or cool buses as necessary
- licensing of vans and minibuses to provide school transport services to small groups of children in remote areas
- modifications to ensure accessibility for all

Recommendation 6.2 Transport for all students under 18 should be the responsibility of one State or Territory government department and managed under policy guidelines to ensure that pre-school children, non-government school students and TAFE students under the age of 18 have guaranteed access to government subsidised school road transport where it exists.

Recommendation 6.3 Each State and Territory government should develop a system whereby the condition of school access routes can be reported to a central register and upgraded as a priority.

Recommendation 7.8 State and Territory governments should provide a conveyancing allowance to families of all students under 18 years of age who must use a private vehicle to travel at least five kilometres from home to the school attended or to the nearest school bus-stop. The allowance, to be paid annually, should be calculated at a rate of 15.3 cents per kilometre for two round trips daily.

Recommendation 7.9 All education providers should ensure that all rural and remote senior secondary students (Years 11 and 12) are fully funded to undertake at least one study trip annually to the capital city of their State or Territory. Where distance requires that trip to be made by air, the full cost of the airfare, together with the costs of accommodation in the capital should be covered. Each school should have a discretion to apply those funds for a study trip to an alternative location.

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3
Students with Disabilities

In 1997, the National Children's and Youth Law Centre conducted research on disability discrimination in schools. In this survey of parents, students and others, problems specific to rural areas included

- lack of choice in schools
- distance involved if a special school or special unit was required by the student but not available in close proximity to home
- difficulty in attracting and keeping skilled teaching staff and aides in country areas
- difficulty for or reluctance of staff to access city-based training opportunities
- shortage or lack of therapists and visiting specialists
- lack of advocacy services or disability support organisations
- inequity in funding distribution formulae (Flynn 1997, page 39)

These problems can severely limit children's access to education.

In a country town there is no choice where we go to school and no-one is there to advise and support us. We have to 'take it or leave it' (quoted by Flynn 1997, page 39).

Brothers from Wodonga, Victoria, photographed by Richard Williams

'Surry', Queensland

From Martin's mother, Queensland.

[Martin's name and those of his town and schools have been changed to protect their privacy.]

Martin was born in 1987 and diagnosed autistic in 1991.

January 1993-June 1994

Martin attended Alpha State Primary School with one hour support per week. I arranged for another hour of aide time per week as well as keeping Martin home on Wednesdays at the school's request. Martin was often taken to school and brought home - 40kms per trip in our own car at our own expense because he could not cope with the bus. He was unable to attend the Autistic Centre because of a waiting list and the only centre is in Brisbane.

June 1994

Family sold farm at Prospect and moved to a farm just out of Surry so Martin could attend a school with better resources.

July 1994-July 1997

Martin attended Beta School, Special Education Unit and classroom. During 1996 I worked with Martin for 3 afternoons each week because he wasn't speaking at school. He spoke well at home. He was happy until April 1997 to July 1997 when he refused to go to school. I made Martin attend school because I was told that he was not to get away with it. I had several meetings with teachers. I saw doctors in regard to reviewing his medication.

July 1997

The Advisory Visiting Teacher and the District Officer encouraged me to place Martin at a local primary school, Delta. The local school was willing to take Martin for 11/2 hours each day.

August 1997

Martin was happy at first but he clashed with the aide who was aggressive. Martin was being trialed on new medication and the school was informed that I was ready to come to the school if necessary. I saw the Principal twice and the Advisory Visiting Teacher and the Autistic School Advisory Officer visited the school in order to improve the situation with the aide but the school would not listen. Immediately after this I took Martin out of school for 6 weeks.

After the 6 weeks Martin attended school for one hour each day and only if the Principal was present. Martin was often dressed for school and then we were rung and told that he was not to come to school. The Principal was away a lot and then he went on Long Service Leave.

I withdrew Martin from Delta school. I asked the Advisory Visiting Teacher for help and was told to find another aide and another school. Martin was told by the Advisory Visiting Teacher that it was all his fault that he was out of school and that he

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was too aggressive. Martin was at this point threatening suicide. He was not eating and he was very touchy. I contacted the doctors and they put Martin on new medication. I rang the travelling Mental Health Team to get assistance as well as other services but there was no help available.

October 1997

A meeting was organised at the Primary School and it was agreed that Martin was to attend a Behaviour Unit for 3 days a week for 4 weeks and then Delta School would take him for 2 hours 2 days per week supported by a male aide. The Student Services Officer set a review date meeting for late November. Martin started at the Unit in mid October.

November 1997

The Principal was unable to attend the Review meeting and the Student Services Officer did not show up. I was told that there was no more time for Martin at school this year and he was to show up for school next year with the same arrangement.

January 1998

I was informed by the Behaviour Unit that Martin was to attend the Unit for 3 hours per day twice each week and I was to contact the District Office regarding Delta Primary School. The District Office said that Martin was able to attend the school and that I should contact the Principal. The Principal was contacted and Martin was to start school on Thursday January 29.

On Monday February 2 the school told us to keep Martin at home while his aide time was sorted out. On Tuesday February 3 I was told to keep Martin home while his program was written. On Wednesday February 4 Martin was back at school with less aide time. Martin was asking why he

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

* Extracted from information published by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and the National Institutes of Health USA at www.mhsource.com/hy/autism.html .

Autism is not a disease, but a developmental disorder of brain function. People with classical autism show three types of symptoms: impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication and imagination, and unusual or severely limited activities and interests. Symptoms of autism usually appear during the first three years of childhood and continue throughout life. Although there is no cure, appropriate management may foster relatively normal development and reduce undesirable behaviours. People with autism have a normal life expectancy.

Autism varies a great deal in severity. The most severe cases are marked by extremely repetitive, unusual, self-injurious, and aggressive behaviour. The mildest forms of autism resemble a personality disorder associated with a perceived learning disability.

Symptoms in many children with autism improve with intervention or as the children mature. Some people with autism eventually lead normal or near-normal lives. Adolescence also worsens behaviour problems in some children with autism, who may become depressed or increasingly unmanageable.

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couldn't go to school like other kids and stay and play with them at lunchtime.

February 1998

At a meeting with 7 professionals at the Behaviour Unit I asked that Martin be given more aide time but I was told no. The Principal is to teach Martin when the Individual Education Program is written.

13 March 1998

Martin saw his specialist in Brisbane and the specialist said that Martin is well enough to be in school full-time and should not be withdrawn because of his disability. The specialist rang the District Office and sent a letter stating this.

30 March 1998

The above information was taken to the local MP's office. No action was forthcoming.

April-May 1998

Martin was doing well at school from 9.00am to 12.00pm. He was asking why he couldn't stay at school longer because he was missing out on lunchtime and excursions.

I met with the Principal, the Aide and the Guidance Officer for short fortnightly meetings to enable us to work effectively with Martin. The Principal, who is also Martin's classroom teacher, was unable to have Martin on his own because he was often called away and there was no time-out room if needed.

Late April 1998

Martin was made to attend Behaviour Unit because of a non-compliance issue just after the school holidays. Martin did not do as he was told and became aggressive because he did not understand what he was supposed to do. Martin was very upset, threatening suicide. I took him to the Behaviour Unit and he was compliant there.

July-August 1998

Martin was attending school until 12.45pm with his Aide and then with respite care that we help pay for so that Martin has some time to play with his peers. Martin was asking why he couldn't stay until 3.00pm. The Principal suggested that I work as a volunteer aide so that the Preschool Aide could assist with Martin. I did this once but then I was not needed as the Principal was away for 2 weeks and Martin could not attend school without him there.

October-November 1998

Martin was to attend 1 and then 2 full days a week but after this was arranged the Principal was unavailable for one of the days. So Martin only attended one full day each week.

January-June 1999

Martin was attending three full days at school because he had more aide time. He attended the other 2 days until 1.30pm with the help of respite care. If the Principal and the Aide were away then Martin did not

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attend school. Martin got a new Advisory Visiting Teacher and a new male aide at this time. The previous aide was unable to continue because the aide time was so variable and he was not trained.

July-August 1999

Martin attended school full-time for 2 full weeks and he was very, very happy. The school then tried having Martin for the last half hour without an Aide but Martin was very upset about this.

The Principal was away on sick leave, though because we had full-time Aide Martin was able to stay at school. In the past, the Principal had to be in attendance because the aide was not full-time. Martin had 2 weeks of full-time schooling, but when the Principal came back they reduced the aide time so that the aide finished at 2.30pm. Martin found this very stressful. He would worry about it all day, so that when it was 2.30pm, he would become unsettled and aggressive. I did offer to come and get him at 2.30pm but the school wanted him to learn without the Aide. His Aide was not trained and decided to leave the school because the school was putting more pressure on him and Martin for more compliant behaviour.

Early September 1999

I was asked to pick up Martin from school because he was aggressive. On the way home he said he wanted to die and he wanted me to shoot him. I told him that he doesn't want to die because he has friends who want to play with him and because we, his parents, love him.

We took Martin to and from school at our own expense. I have been unable to have a full-time job because I never know whether Martin will be at school. Martin's father is a farmer and the farm has suffered because Martin is home so much and he needs to be occupied.

In 1996 Martin could read simple stories. Now he can't.

November 1999

During this time Martin hit the Principal due to a misunderstanding. The Principal threatened legal action against us. I withdrew Martin from school. The Principal then sent us a letter to say that another school would be found in the area.

2000

Martin is withdrawn from school because the school can't cope with him and another school has not been found. He is now to be schooled at home with me.

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Disability Support, Discrimination and Other Issues

Integration support

Martin's experience demonstrates that students with disabilities may require a range of special educational support within the school system if they are to benefit from formal schooling. Without this support, students with disabilities are severely disadvantaged compared to other children. In rural and remote areas this support can be sporadic or lacking.

Many small rural and regional schools do not have enough students to warrant a special education unit. If there are fewer than five students with special learning needs, the school is also unlikely to have a full-time teacher's aide, even though a student with a disability may be unable to attend school without an aide on call to assist. A school with funding for an aide may be unable to attract one. Qualified people are often reluctant to relocate to small communities for positions that are only part-time.

There may be need for a special unit in an ordinary school. One does not usually obtain this unit unless there are at least 5 children with substantial disabilities. In a small school in a regional area there may not be 5 or 10 children with disabilities (Pat Crothers, ASD Advisory Visiting Teacher, submission)

Eleven of the 170 students at Lajamanu Community Education Centre in the NT have special education needs. The special education teacher position, however, is only 0.5 (half) of a position. This teacher relies heavily on a committed team of people working as casual Inclusion Support Assistants (ISAs).

As we need a 'pool' of people working as ISAs at Lajamanu CEC. These people are employed casually and therefore receive no holiday pay (12 weeks/year), no sick pay, no recognition of longevity of service and no career structure. We believe that this is an unsatisfactory arrangement as it devalues this staff's work and commitment and in turn suggests that students with disabilities are not truly included when their support staff do not have the same importance attached to their position and the same rights in the workplace as other staff. While we are fortunate at Lajamanu CEC to currently have a full staff in the Special Education Department [the other half of the position is for ESL], many other schools have commented on their difficulties in filling and keeping staff in ISA positions due to conditions [of employment]. This lack of support staff

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obviously impacts on students with disabilities' outcomes and educational achievements (Lajamanu Community Education Centre NT submission).

Integrating a child with special needs into a mainstream classroom environment can be particularly challenging for teachers without special education training. In a classroom environment with over 25 students some teachers feel overwhelmed by the responsibility.

Sometimes there are attitude problems where a teacher or other professional person is unwilling to recognise Autism. This is especially true for higher functioning children (Toowoomba North State School Campus Qld submission).

In a situation where teacher's aides are not available or the child is allocated only a few hours of support, class teachers may experience the child as a burden on their resources. While some submissions place integration responsibility squarely with the principal and teaching staff, this problem is also systemic and requires that adequate resources are provided by education authorities.

We don't have enough funding to cover the kids [with special needs] from 9am to 3pm but there is only a select amount in the bucket and I think the district committee is rather fair in how they divvy that out. We've always been looked after I think you have to do a bit of creative thinking to meet the needs of the kids. The kids spend a fair bit of their time with other kids, which is also good for them. The allocation for 1999 is workable (Paul Loxley, Bourke Public School Principal, Bourke NSW hearing).

In schools with adequate resources and training, the integration of children with special needs can benefits all students.

[T]he facility is attached to a mainstream school of approximately 460 students who have developed an understanding and acceptance of deafness. A large percentage of the school population can also sign, thus immersing the children in their first language (Suzanne Harrison, Traralgon Deaf Facility, submission).

Limited options

In rural and remote areas, if integration fails there are limited alternatives. In many rural communities there is only one school within travelling distance and, if this school does not accommodate the needs of the student, then the family is often forced to relocate. Other options in rural and remote areas may include special units within mainstream schools, special schools or home schooling. However, these may not be the most appropriate option for the child. Special schools and special units may not be available in the local area.

A group of parents in Northern Tasmania

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established a special school specifically to meet the needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Giant Steps provides specialised learning programs and specialist support and therapy. One family decided to bypass a closer special school (which had proven to be unable to cater for the needs of their child) to send the child to Giant Steps. In the words of the child's mother, the more distant school, Giant Steps, had 'the only program that had made a difference for him'. Yet in this instance the family may be denied the Commonwealth subsidy, Assistance for Isolated Children, which supplies a boarding or second home allowance.

If children are bypassing a local special school, or there is a special school within a 50 kilometre radius of the home, then the family of a child at Giant Steps will not be eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children funds. The Giant Steps program is not considered to be a more appropriate school when there are special schools closer by. This means there are no funding subsidies (Devonport Tas public meeting).

A number of submissions to the inquiry express disillusionment with the education available to children with special needs, both at special schools and in integrated settings.

When my son was two he was involved with early special education. They didn't know what to do with him. They kept pushing him up a year and then they would ring me to come and take him home early. Later my son was at the local special school but they could not cope with him (Devonport Tas public meeting).

We elected to send our son to a special school as he became so unhappy in an integrated setting. The closest [special] school was 45 miles away. It refused enrolment because our son did not have an intellectual disability. The school where he was forced to move to is 135 miles away. There was no special school near home. My child can now not live at home during the week (quoted by Flynn 1997, page 16).

As a last resort a significant number of parents choose to educate their children at home.

In the calendar year to date my daughter has been stripped entirely of her self esteem and has been a violent and uncontrollable child as a result of poor management while at school ... I believe these problems [at the school] exist because of lack of money, time, expertise and experience. I have not been able to make any effective change to the way the school manages my daughter and so it is [my] intention to remove her from [the] ...tional school education and register her for home schooling (Lynn McIntyre, Tumbarumba NSW, submission).

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Danny won't complete his secondary school. I can say that straight away. There is no school for Danny to carry onto. The only reason he'll probably go on to his sixth grade is because I'll have to take him back into the home setting to do home schooling (Robyn Raine, Coonda Family Support Group, Melbourne hearing).

Home schooling can place considerable stress on the home tutor (usually the child's mother) who may have no teaching qualifications. In addition, the responsibility of home schooling may mean the loss of that parent's opportunity to earn an income outside the home or to participate fully in the family business.

Physical access

In rural and remote settings school modifications may take time and substantial resources. School access can be limited if school buildings and resources are not modified to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. For example, students in wheelchairs may need ramps and lifts installed to access the school building and classrooms. Students with sight impairment may need special Braille facilities attached to a computer.

I'm proud of the educational community in Bourke for accepting my daughter into the school system. It has been good, but in some ways I wonder if we have greatly disadvantaged her by making her stay here.

We've been planning for two and half years for her to enter high school. Now it's the fourth week and she's still not able to access the school due to equipment not arriving in time. The modifications to the building have only just been finalised.

Communication equipment was recommended by Special Services two years ago and that turned up two weeks before school finished last year. She could have had two years' of use of that equipment (Bourke NSW community meeting).

Lajamanu Community Education Centre in the NT has 11 students with a range of disabilities. School modifications required include a toilet block with disability access and ramps and paths.

We have had applications in with the Education Department for a year and a half now, to have our school modified to meet disability standards ... but the process is so slow that nothing happens ... there seems to be no special provisions to get this disability access. You just have to apply like everyone else does for improvements to the school ... there is no actual process which we can go through to get disability access and to get it quickly.

Our three students with mobility difficulties are forced to walk on uneven,

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rocky ground and to climb up steps that put them at risk of falling. Our two children in wheelchairs are bumped along this uneven ground. We are particularly concerned for our student with Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy. His deteriorating condition means that he is losing muscle strength, for example in his neck, and we have noted that on rocky ground his head bounces around. We believe that the extreme slowness of the procedure to modify our school creates unnecessary health risks for our students and denies them full access to Lajamanu CEC (Lajamanu NT community meeting).

Transport

Rural and remote families often travel long distances to the nearest school. For many children with disabilities, school bus transport is not accessible or is otherwise inappropriate.

My daughter has a disability and she has a wheelchair. One problem we have is the modification of buses. She is getting too heavy to lift into the car (she is 14 years old). She is also unable to go on school excursions. The Education Department says that it is not their responsibility. Well whose responsibility is it? At Fitzroy Crossing we have only one modified bus and that is used every day for Aged Care. We don't have any modified taxis (Fitzroy Crossing WA public meeting).

This means that the task of transporting the child to school falls to the family.

Transport has been a huge issue for our family. When my child started Giant Steps [a special school for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder] I drove him to Deloraine each day for a year with my younger child. Then when my younger child started school it was too hard to continue with the travel for the two of them. There is no school bus for her and I could not get to Deloraine. I withdrew my son and put him back at the special school but they could not cope with him. When we wanted to go back to Giant Steps the Government told us to get in a car pool. Disability Services does not do transport. The Education Department was not willing to help us with transport. It became a pitched battle for us to get him into the only program that had made a difference for him and for us. We put him in respite service for six weeks. They soon realised that he was not the kind of kid who could be transported by car pool and they gave us some money. There was no understanding that he has a right to specialist education (public meeting in Devonport Tas).

The Commonwealth does not provide transport subsidies. However, the Northern Territory and all States except Tasmania provide additional transport assistance for rural and remote students with disabilities, usually on a case by case basis (see the Table on pages 17-18).

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Transport costs can be significantly elevated for parents of children with disabilities if they become, in the opinion of the school, non-compliant and disruptive in class. Parents can be required to collect their children from school at any time of the day if the child has behaved in a way that is contrary to school rules or school policy.

Current 'take home' management strategies cause rural families extra-ordinary additional costs if they have to travel long distances to collect a child who has reportedly acted out at school (Annette Herbert, Inclusive Education Network SA, submission).

Disability support services

Particular disadvantages for many rural and remote families are the lack of specialist services and the discontinuity of assessment and treatment. Many submissions describe visiting specialists who come once each year. One will assess the child and then there may be another year-long wait for a specialist to treat the child.

Rural services for our students such as speech pathology, occupatibnal therapy and counselling are fully stretched due to the demands placed upon them. The Upper Hunter Community Health provides this service but due to the smaller number of providers the waiting time to attend such service is very long. At this stage there is an 18 month wait for occupational therapy and over 500 children on the list for speech pathology (Aberdeen Public School NSW submission).

The services for children with disabilities are very hit and miss and uncoordinated. There is no continuity of service of specialist staff either. These staff do not know what has gone on before. There are also long delays for service. We have a child with a broken hearing aid and it has been broken for ages. He has been without it for most of this year (Billiluna WA school meeting).

Late diagnosis of learning difficulties compounds the learning problems of children with special needs. Auxiliary health services provide essential diagnostic and therapeutic services to assist with the learning process. Many of these services are non-existent in rural and remote communities. Inter-departmental coordination is also poor or lacking entirely.

A lack of consultation of various government departments about the whole person approach for dealing with a child and the child's disabilities. There seems to be no consultation between Transport, Education and Family Services as well as consideration of employment and post school options (Ray Vallance, Rockhampton Qld, submission).

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Anti-discrimination law

Discrimination on the ground of disability or impairment is unlawful in every State and Territory and in Commonwealth programs. This includes discrimination in education. Disability and impairment are defined widely and include

- total or partial loss of a bodily function, including mental function, or a malfunction
- having a disease or organisms which cause a disease
- total or partial loss of a part of the body
- having an illness or disorder which affects thought processes, behaviour, emotions and/or judgment

Examples of disabilities include epilepsy, hepatitis, being HIV+, clubfoot, Downs Syndrome, dyslexia, schizophrenia, autism and paraplegia.

Disability discrimination in education occurs

- when a student or prospective student with a disability is treated less favourably than a student without a disability because of the disability, for example when the school refuses to enrol the student with a disability or
- when a condition attaching to enrolment or participation in the school, although it applies equally to all students, actually disadvantages students with disabilities, for example when all science classes are held on an upper floor and there is no lift.

If a student with a disability meets the essential entry requirements, the school must make changes or 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate that student, for example by supplying Braille equipment or installing a lift. However, if the changes required will cause major difficulties or 'unjustifiable hardship' for the school, then the change is not required under the legislation. It is up to the school to show that the adjustments would cause unjustifiable hardship. Judging what is unreasonable or an unjustifiable hardship makes interpreting disability discrimination laws particularly difficult.

The factors relevant to 'unjustifiable hardship' under the Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) include

- the benefit or detriment to both school and student
- the effect of the complainant's disability
- the school's financial circumstances and the estimated cost of the changes required
- whether the school has prepared an action plan for achieving the objects of the DDA which include the elimination of disability discrimination (sections 11 and 3).

The Commission's former President, Sir Ronald Wilson, wrote in his judgment in the 1995 case *Scott v Telstra*

The term 'unjustifiable hardship' is not defined in the DDA. Section 11 provides

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a list of some of the factors that may be considered in determining unjustifiable hardship but the DDA does not specifically define the term itself.

In my opinion, the content of the term 'unjustifiable hardship' will depend upon the circumstances of each case. In the present case, the meaning of the term will emerge from: (1) identifying what magnitude of difficulty would confront the respondent ... if there were to be a finding of unlawfulness; and (2) establishing whether or not imposing the relevant obligation is justified by reference to the benefits of fairness, if any, that would come from imposing it.

The definitions of disability discrimination in education and of the unjustifiable hardship defence are essentially identical or very similar to the DDA in the NSW *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*, the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, the WA *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the ACT *Discrimination Act 1991*. The Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* and the NT *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* capture the same concepts with the notion of reasonableness of the accommodation that would be required. In South Australia there is a statutory exemption for inaccessible premises (*Equal Opportunity Act 1984* section 84).

HREOC Recommendations

Children with disabilities are entitled to an education without discrimination. In every possible case, inclusion into mainstream schooling is desirable to maximise the child's learning and social integration. This means that the resources needed to support the child and his or her teachers in mainstream schooling must be provided by education authorities.

Recommendation 5.3: State and Territory governments should provide resources for mobile multi-disciplinary early intervention teams to make regular visits to communities at locations accessible to rural and remote families to assess the health and education needs of children in the 0 to 5 age group, develop necessary remedial programs and assist with referrals and access to specialist services as required.

Recommendation 5.9c: All teacher training institutions should require undergraduates to study a module on the rights and needs of students with special needs, including standardised, formal and informal assessment, curriculum design, instruction and classroom management strategies for teaching students with diverse educational needs with minimal extra support.

Recommendation 6.10
Commonwealth, State and Territory health departments should develop and implement programs to increase the

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numbers and accessibility of health and disability support services, especially speech therapists and child psychologists, in rural and remote communities. These measures should include

- programs of incentives to attract and retain general practitioners, dentists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors and physiotherapists to rural and remote areas where access is severely restricted or non-existent
- establishing protocols for schools and education providers to obtain health department assistance to meet urgent needs for particular health related expertise in the area
- either arranging transport or providing transport subsidies to enable families of children with special needs to access the nearest available health or therapy service in the absence of local expertise
- ensuring that the various isolated patient travel and accommodation assistance schemes can meet the costs of travel between jurisdictions when families live near a border and the medical treatment can be provided more conveniently interstate.

Recommendation 6.11 All education providers should ensure that all rural and remote school students have access to a school counsellor on a frequent and regular basis and for a reasonable period of time as determined in consultation with school councils. This access could be provided through

- incentive programs to attract mental health specialists to the region, fully subsidised to provide their services free of charge to school students
- direct funding of counsellors in all schools
- provision of visiting counsellors based on a small clustering system which should guarantee a regular visit to each school, with in-built flexibility for extra visits in exceptional circumstances and realistic travel allowances.

Recommendation 6.12 The Commonwealth Departments of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and Health and Aged Care, in cooperation with State and Territory health, children's services and education departments, should fund all early childhood services, pre-schools and schools serving a significant percentage of children with otitis media to provide

- regular ear and nose diagnostic and prevention programs such as 'cough, spit, blow' from first enrolment throughout schooling
- modifications to classrooms and other facilities including carpeting, soundproofing and provision of microphones
- teacher training on otitis media, its prevention and range of treatments
- very significantly improved access to health services including provision of hearing aids to children with mild to moderate hearing loss.

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Recommendation 6.13: MCEETYA should sponsor and monitor a national commitment to inclusive education by all governments that reaches all education providers, principals and teachers. The Adelaide Declaration on *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* should be revised to include a commitment to inclusive education to the fullest extent possible for all children with special needs based on the principles of the Salamanca Statement.

Recommendation 6.14: All education providers should fund educational and therapy support services in rural and remote schools and early childhood centres according to the individual needs of students.

Recommendation 6.15: All education providers should review the adequacy of provision of special education support for all students with learning and behavioural disorders and revise funding guidelines to ensure that students with recognised special needs are not disadvantaged because of inflexible formulas and criteria.

Recommendation 6.16: All education providers should build into funding mechanisms for capital works a priority for capital works facilitating mobility access, with a special priority for remote area schools based on the added time for construction work to be contracted and completed and limited alternatives for schooling. Education providers should ensure effective planning at the local school level so that school modifications occur prior to the student's commencement date wherever possible.

Recommendation 6.17a: All education providers should establish information programs for students, parents, teachers and principals on the rights of students with special needs and the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the relevant State or Territory anti-discrimination legislation.

Recommendation 6.17b: All education providers should ensure that information about relevant anti-discrimination laws, education policies, guidelines and funding arrangements is freely available to parents and students through measures such as

- handbooks distributed to parents of students with special needs
- website information
- regular meetings between parents, principals and district special education staff.

Recommendation 6.18: State and Territory community and children's services departments should fund rural and remote area family support networks to assist isolated families of children with special needs to access information and support.

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4
Distance Education

Regional distance education centres deliver educational programs to isolated children on pastoral properties and in remote communities throughout Australia. Distance education centres are located in all States and the Northern Territory. In general, isolated primary school children are more likely than secondary students to access distance education as a full-time school program.

Delivery modes include at least one, and sometimes a combination, of telephone, radio, text, computer, telematics and/or, less commonly, interactive television. Telephone and radio are still the most frequently utilised forms of communication. Phone calls to teachers are also widely used to obtain educational support and to solve problems. Full-time distance education requires assistance at home from a home tutor, most often the child's mother.

An "On-Air" lesson in Queensland

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Barcoo Shire, Queensland

From Women for Power.

The Barcoo Shire is situated south of Longreach and west of Quilpie and is the forth largest shire in the State. Stonehenge, Jundah and Windorah are our three small townships. Jundah and Windorah generate their own electricity - maintained by Capelec. 1997 figures showed that every man, woman and child contributed $40,000 EACH to our State's productivity - population 462. Main industries are oil, beef, sheep and opal.

There are already rural properties in the Barcoo Shire connected to grid power and approximately 40 properties in the Shire are yet to be connected. (About 35 of these - 140 people - live within a 100km radius of Jundah). This matter has been pursued for well over 10 years. Each new government promises some new scheme which is abolished after each election.

For power, most residents operate 240 volt generators which are usually run about 5 hours per day due to high fuel costs. One family with a disabled son run their generator for 24 hours - costing $35,000 per year for fuel, oil, filters only - not including breakdowns, parts or replacement - compare this with the cost of running four households in a town which would be about $4,00 per year. Is this not discrimination? We cannot leave our generators unattended which means we cannot leave our properties for more than 24 hours.

Primary, secondary and tertiary students are disadvantaged due to lack of access to modern information technology including the Internet. Special needs students are especially disadvantaged. Students cannot reach their full learning potential whilst working in classroom temperatures exceeding 40C. Without the availability of air-conditioners or fans, concentration is difficult. Students have daily 30 minute on-air lessons and they rely on power. Most use car batteries. Flat? Mum removes from vehicle, carries (20kg) inside before child can commence (grid power means a power pack).

From Ann-Maree Lloyd, Yaraka.

Due to the lack of a constant power supply we incur the following problems in our school room.

(a) 40 degree plus temperatures in summer in our school room, we do not have the benefit of air-conditioning because the cold room etc. are more important at the time of day and the engine will not take the load of both at once.

(b) The use of unreliable 12 volt batteries to power our school radio, sometimes resulting in poor transmission and reception.

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(c) The use of computer technology is difficult with no guarantee of constant power supply. The risk of over-power and under-power surges a reality.

Through summer living without power is difficult, especially with small children. On a hot night with no air-conditioning or fan it is most unbearable for the children. Within minutes of the engine going off, they are uncomfortable and miserable, finding it difficult to get a good night's sleep and as a result their school work suffers.

From Kerri Pidgeon, Jundah.

As a wife and mother I have lived in the Barcoo Shire for the past seventeen years, without rural power or any reliable power source. After many years of being led to believe that mains electricity may be just around the corner, I am still living in conditions that are prior to my grandmother ...

I have three children, and because of our isolation these children are taught school by me through the Longreach School of Distance Education. Their school radio is operated by a 12 volt car battery which needs to be recharged frequently. Whereas if we were to have main power we would just plug the radio into a converter and no need to worry about a flat battery. That it not my main concern. It is a struggle at the best of times to teach your own children and keep them interested in their school papers, but when they have to sit in a room and try to learn and pay attention when the temperature reaches above 40C (and we have had 50C in the shade), you don't blame them for not being able to concentrate. I can't myself. You try it for about two months on end without air-conditioning. I don't believe that many people in the city would work under these conditions.

My children have been fortunate to belong to a school where the opportunity to have a computer at home for a set amount of time has been available to them. The children had lessons with their teacher over the radio. Before school began the first thing to be done was to fill the generator with diesel (it's tough luck if you're not strong enough to wind the generator and flick the compression levers). It didn't always go that smoothly. The children had their lessons and learnt about the Internet, which by the way, is too slow and a waste of time - and I mean time - it takes too long to get pages up in this area. Meanwhile the generator is thumping away. I found that my children did not use it more than necessary as they had limited time and power. They couldn't use it whenever they wanted because the power wouldn't be going.

In a world where things are moving faster, no wonder country people have been labelled slow at doing things. In our home it takes a great deal of effort just to do the everyday things in most people's lives.

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From Christine Winters, Jundah.

My son received a computer from Longreach School of Distance Education [LSODE] for Grade 6 last year and to join Telstra Big Pond Internet we were given 20 bonus hours free on the net but because of no electricity we only used 4 hours of our 20 hours while children who had power used all their 20 hours plus could play games on the computer to their hearts content. My son could only use it at night when we had the generator on but then we were juggling other appliances and he couldn't have it on for long as we could blow up the computer with fluctuating power and then it was time for bed. Therefore he didn't become as proficient at using the computer as the children on grid power.

This year for Grade 7 he was supposed to send a lot of his work to LSODE completed on the computer but because we don't have the power and it is just not possible for him to use it for hours we are now driving him the 45kms to school every day, covering a distance of 180kms a day. Our primary reason was because he would be unable to complete the tasks set because of no electricity.

The convenience of being able to flick a switch and have power alleviates problems associated with education and children's problems throughout the night. Anybody with electricity can solve problems competently and efficiently, but we can't because we have substandard electricity.

From Anne Lloyd, Blackall.

I would like to draw your attention to the great disadvantages the children studying from Longreach School of Distance Education [one of 7 DE centres in Queensland] and correspondence face when trying to keep up with their city based counterparts. With the technology today, children disadvantaged by no mains power face an even greater upheaval when having to pay $7.00 per hour for use of the Internet and it takes 4 times as long to down-load as it does in the city. Graphics have to be deleted to keep the costs down as, with the present telephone service, the down-loading of information for school work is very slow.

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Other Distance Education Issues

Telecommunications infrastructure

The real problems surrounding the use of on-line technology for distance education into homes in rural and remote areas include issues of access to hardware and infrastructure, bandwidth, cost and reliability (Education Queensland submission, page 7).

Access to appropriate technology infrastructure and maintenance support remains problematic for many rural and remote distance education students in Australia. According to the National Farmers' Federation, only 14% of farms and 8% of country households have Internet access compared with 14% of households in capital cities and a national average of 12% (National Farmers' Federation submission).

It is estimated that only 12,000 of Australia's 120,000 productive farms have access to the Internet and then often with high costs and poor service quality.

Currently, Australian rural and remote areas are characterised by limited access to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), higher telephone costs and very slow Internet access speed if available at all.

Within the state education system of Queensland there has been significant improvement in the provision of Internet services to the rural school site through the Connect Ed initiative. Alas, no program has attempted to address the accessibility of technology for remotely isolated students (Priority Country Area Program Qld State Council submission).

Internet costs can also be prohibitive.

Internet access is much more expensive for remote people. Accessing service providers often requires STD call rates. It costs us $7 per hour to access Telstra Bigpond. This contrasts with the cities where Telstra Bigpond has a flat rate of $44 per month and with some other service providers as low as $29 per month. The irony is that remote children need the internet even more than city children because of the very fact that they are isolated. They get to see very little of the world outside their own backyard (Boulia Qld public meeting).

Many remote communities across Australia lack grid power or have intermittent power. The inquiry has received submissions from nearly all States and Territories detailing these difficulties.

I have two children on School of the Air Port Augusta. My children miss out socially because of where we live and I understand and accept this. Technology and support service is low. We need to

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generate our own power so the children don't have access to the computer at all times ... (anonymous SA submission).

In NSW the inquiry was told

There is an isolation problem for distance education children. They really need help. My kids can't talk to their teachers by radio because we don't have a satisfactory radio system. We have to rely on the telephone. This is not good because they can't join in library lessons or assembly where they talk to the children in their class. They only get their two half hour sessions a week with their personal teacher because of the cost of the telephone. If we had a radio that worked then they could have after school chat time with their friends (Walgett NSW public meeting).

The radio system doesn't work a lot of the time, and that's due to sunspots, or storms, or cockatoos eating through the wire, or whatever it might be. Telstra has no plans to upgrade the system between the centres and the properties. Distance education could really do with a system of satellite dishes (Edna McGill, Ethnic Communities Council, Sydney hearing).

Similar problems and wishes were reported from Victoria.

Capital and financial assistance should be given to enable modern communication equipment, including computers, fax and dedicated telephone lines for this to be available for children in rural and remote areas. Ongoing financial help also should be considered, to keep the equipment up to date with modern technology. We also do not have 'mains' electricity, and it is necessary for us to generate power. There is a significant cost in this. At present we can supply enough power to run the house with 240 volt AC power for two hours in total.

We need to be able to access technical expertise and purchase equipment for the children's education at Government tender prices. For example, we desperately need a portable tape recorder that can be taken outside to record sounds, and we will probably need to purchase one very soon. A 'normal' school has access to funds to be able to provide this sort of equipment for their students, but isolated families schooling children by distance are expected to purchase most equipment themselves.

One of the difficulties for us and many other remote families is knowing how to access services.

We have seen marvellous language and mathematics programs in primary and secondary schools in Victoria. These programs come to schools by satellite. We wish our children to be able to take advantage of this, but obtaining a satellite dish and decoder appears impossible. We have made several attempts of trying to access one, but have

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always been told by Education Victoria that it is not available to our children.

If remote based children cannot obtain satellite equipment from the Education Department, could the programs be relayed through the commercial rural satellites at a reduced cost? Many isolated families, including ourselves, use the Austar satellite to obtain 'Discovery' and 'National Geographic' channels to augment their children's education. There are empty channels on this system. One educational channel with specific school programs would be a wonderful boon (Grahame and Lynda Code, Aberfeldy Vic, submission).

Appropriate technology can assist the learning of isolated children. In Broken Hill NSW, a 1999 satellite trial supported by Telstra improved communication between a teacher and twelve geographically isolated students.

A teacher at Broken Hill had 12 Year 3/Year 4 students who were located in the area north of Broken Hill. That area was selected because radio broadcast is quite scratchy from there, and it was an attempt to put in place something that would improve the delivery of services. ...Each day for an hour, a teacher interacted with the 12 students. [The teacher] could call up and look at the work they had. The teacher's face was on the screen at all times. The students had telephone contact if there were difficulties or if the teacher was teaching too quickly. They were all fairly inexperienced with computers when the program commenced, but developed those skills as part of the overall program (Dr Alan Rice, NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney hearing).

The students who took part in the trial evaluated the experience positively.

'I could see the teacher, hear the teacher ...'

'I could see other kids' work and talk to the teacher ...'

'The teacher explained it more, I could think more, and it could be put up on screen ...'

'Instead of telling you on the radio they actually show you ...' (quoted by Boylan and Wallace 1999, page 49).

Demands on home tutors

While distance education can provide excellent educational programs for primary children, extensive tutoring is also required in the home schoolroom. A home supervisor, usually the child's mother, is expected to support the child's learning at home.

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) estimates that there are 2,600 geographically isolated parents supporting the education of 3,300 children and that 98% of these home supervisors are women. Many of them are attempting to combine management

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of their family farms and businesses, the care of infants and de-facto full-time teaching duties as supervisors of distance education for their older children. Under prolonged conditions of economic strain, many women add to this list part-time employment outside the home (Women's Electoral Lobby Australia submission).

Extensive evidence to the inquiry cites the difficulties that home tutors face in supervising distance education. A daily 30-minute radio lesson and a text-based syllabus constitute only part of each child's program. The onus for providing motivation, organisation, tutoring and other educational support rests with the home tutor.

The supervisor plays a vital role in primary distance education, in the organisation of the lesson materials, explanation of what is required in the lesson as well as completing written responses for the teacher as to what the student is achieving and how they are handling the lesson materials.

If the supervisor (usually the mother) has limited literacy and numeracy skills, they cannot effectively help the student with the lessons. Most isolated rural and remote supervisors who are teaching their students by Distance Education delivery mode have no prior teaching degrees or experience. In some cases there may be too many demands on the supervisor such as working on the property, supervising the lessons, and caring for preschoolers as well. This is compounded by curriculum overload, the same that all trained teachers experience, but with less support for the supervisor. In these cases some parents decide in the interest of their children's education to board them away from home for primary years. For some families this means they are placed in a very difficult financial position trying to access an appropriate education for their children. Scenarios such as this show that there is little or no choice for those families in isolated rural and remote areas when they cannot cope with Distance Education (Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Australia) submission).

Other costs

There are many costs associated with home schooling by distance education.

Costs for *children being educated at home include the following:*

- *Cost of setting up and maintaining a school room.*
- *The cost of running the generator for extended hours to provide power for necessary 'power driven' school items. Eg computers and radios for On Air lessons.*
- *Travel to compulsory school and extra curricula activities and added expenses involved with rental of accommodation and extra travelling expenses for*

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parents to keep in contact so that the family unit is kept strong are examples of additional expenses (Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Australia) submission).

Other costs include the cost of the home tutor's time in assisting and supporting the child in the schoolroom. Many home tutors have responsibilities associated with the family business or property. There is currently no remuneration for home tutors to compensate for the time they spend in the classroom.

The Commonwealth's Assistance for Isolated Children, Distance Education Allowance provides $1,000 a year for primary students and $1,500 for secondary students to assist with the costs of setting up a home schoolroom. The inquiry was told that these amounts are inadequate.

Students enrolled in distance education need access to one workstation per family with a modem and printer and individual software licences. This is much more expensive to set up than the concept of a computer room or individual computers on a Local Area Network (LAN) in a school environment. The Federal Government needs to consider some sort of subsidy scheme or grant to provide access to this technology for remote and isolated families, similar to the Homestead Video Scheme of the 1970s when these families had no access to television (Open Access College SA submission).

HREOC Recommendations

Generally distance education in Australia is of a high quality with good outcomes for many isolated students. The failings are in the lack of training and support for home supervisors/tutors, isolation from a diverse range of shared experiences and the financial burden on families to equip the home schoolroom for contemporary distance education delivery modes. Distance education is not suitable for all students and cannot be relied on to ensure effective educational access for every isolated student.

Recommendation 5.14: In recognition of the vital role played by the home supervisor/tutor, each education department should ensure that they are funded to access professional development once a year. Ideally this professional development would be offered in conjunction with residential weeks provided for children learning by distance.

Recommendation 5.15: Each education department, in co-operation with health and children's services departments and local government authorities, should fund educational support, including special needs support, for all families with children receiving distance education at home. Mobile children's resources units offer one means of providing this support.

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Recommendation 6.6 The Commonwealth should increase the rebate for installation of satellite services for remote households unable to access the basic ISDN service and in which at least one member is engaged in primary or secondary school education. The rebate should cover at least that part of the installation cost that is not currently subsidised.

Recommendation 7.6 The AIC Distance Education Allowance should be revised by adding

1. a component of $1,500 per household per year for computer hardware, software and maintenance and access to the Internet and the school (by phone or E-mail)
2. a component of $500 per student per year for student travel to participate in learning and competition opportunities additional to residential tuition camps.

Recommendation 7.7 The AIC Distance Education Allowance should be revised by adding a means-tested component per family to assist the family to secure the voluntary services of a tutor for a period of up to six weeks each year. The income threshold should be the same as for the Additional Boarding Allowance.

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5
Indigenous Homelands

Homeland communities are small decentralised communities of close kin established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them (*Return to Country* 1987, page 7).

In evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Dr H C Coombs described the development of Homeland communities.

[They are an] attempt by Aborigines to moderate the rate of cultural change caused by contact with European ways and commodities, to re-establish a physical, social and spiritual environment in which traditional components will once more be dominant and the influence of the alien culture more marginal (quoted in Return to Country 1987, page 5).

According to *Return to Country*, there were 588 homeland communities in 1987 and 111 excision communities (areas of land legally excised from pastoral leases to provide living areas for Aboriginal communities). Population sizes varied from family units of six to larger kin groups of 100 and more.

Ramyala School students, East Arnhem Land NT

East Arnhem Land, NT

From Gawirrin Gumana, Gangan.

I am worrying about education for our children in the Homelands. In the Homelands with people and schools, they are learning two ways, the Balanda [European] way and the Yolŋu way.

We have been thinking that the government is not going to label us as 'lost people' like those Aboriginal people in the south. We don't want that to happen.

That's why we are thinking that later on, in the future, Yolŋu people will still speak their language and still be Yolŋu people in many generations to come. This is what I am worrying about, and that's why I feel strongly that the children must learn both ways. The Western way is like writing a letter, looking after books, going on excursions, money, mechanic or whatever for learning or for employment. In the Yolŋu way, I have been thinking that Yolŋu people must not forget about ceremony, singing, culture and hunting. That is what I have been thinking and worrying about a lot.

It is alright if our children want to become a lawyer, policeman, doctor, teacher or whatever. But our culture must still stand and it mustn't be broken, so that the government would not say to us or to our descendants in the future that we are lost people without culture. We must remain as Yolŋu people. That is why it is important to learn both ways.

The Balanda way is new to us, but our people and children still don't know their own culture yet, like ceremony and other cultural matters. They are not learning their culture, to make the two ways work together, for both Western and Yolŋu culture to be equal. That is what I really desire, so that our culture, our kinship system, and our way of life will stand strong and not fall apart. We mustn't be killed by the other cultures.

Yolŋu people must be themselves and also learn more and teach others. This is what I have been worrying about.

This school is good but still small as it is filling up with children. I am thinking that the children should be learning properly and they should have a proper school. Teachers will come here and teach the children, now and in the future. But at the moment, our people and our children are half-way; at the moment, they are not really understanding what education is about and even their own culture they don't know. Over there is the Balanda way, and over here is the Yolŋu way, and our children are in the middle. I don't know which way they will go, but I want our children to learn properly so that they will teach the children in future generations. These are just my thoughts for you to think about and to understand.

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I am worrying because at the moment the children are only moderately competent at writing their own name but other names they still don't know how to write. The children should learn those because it is too difficult and too late for the old people now. Then the school will grow, not only the building but the children will always attend school when the lessons are being taught.

A long time ago, we were planning and discussing the possibility of having a school for the outstations, a school that would be situated in the middle where it is accessible to the Homelands people. The school should be standing in the middle of the Homelands area so that all the people from the Homelands can access the school.

We were talking like this many times previously, but nothing came out of it. But if the government can see us and our children and recognise our situation, we would get a central school for the Homelands, a school situated in the middle of the area.

We thought somewhere in the middle of the Homelands areas would be appropriate, so that the children will be able to come from far and wide, perhaps even from Gapuwiyak, to attend the school. This idea of such a school is like that of the Dhupuma College. If the government can see how they can fund such a school that would be good.

The government must look at us and recognise us and trust us, and not think that we are not committed to our Homelands and that we are just moving around from place to place. That used to happen before but not now, we stay permanently now at our Homelands and only leave for ceremony. But our school is always going to be here as part of the land. I'm saying these things for the government to hear and to think it over.

From Dhukal Wirrpanda, Dhuruputjpi

The children don't really like being at other Homeland schools and they always worry when they are there.

A long time ago I had the idea of starting a school and I talked at meetings but nothing happened: my idea was to have books sent here so that we can teach our own children, and then to send the books back when they are finished. But I don't know what the situation is and I don't know how to ask for such a service, so if you find out for me let us know, and if it isn't possible to get a service like that, also let me know.

Here at Dhuruputjpi, we haven't got enough children to start a school. We are crying out for an education service.

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From Nambara Schools Council, Yirrkala.

... education is a tool through which aspirations relating to future community development, greater autonomy, and improved standards of living and well-being, can be achieved.

In order to gain approval and status as a Homeland centre school, an education service must firstly be requested by the community, and then specific criteria must be met before approval is granted. The criteria include a demonstration by the community of a degree of stability, a genuine interest in developing a school, and the availability and suitability of an assistant teacher in the community.

If the criteria are met, the Superintendent then approves a trial period of up to 6 months, during which time the assistant teacher is expected to work without pay.

With satisfactory progress and regular attendance by school children during the trial period, the Superintendent will then make a request to the Secretary of the NT Department of Education for approval of the Homeland as a Homeland Learning Centre.

Contingent upon the establishment and approval of a Homeland Learning Centre is the requirement for an average attendance of twelve school age children during the trial period. This requires at least 12 school age children as permanent residents in the community.

Whilst the policy shows much credit in terms of ensuring economical use of education funds, ultimately the policy is discriminatory and in non-compliance with Australia's international human rights obligations. It is abundantly clear that NT Government policy for Homelands education is discriminatory because, in contrast to other small communities including rural ones, only Homeland communities - in order to attain a schooling service - must:

- ask for a service: this is not a requirement for urban, rural and other remote non-Homeland communities,
- understand the limitations of service: this demonstrates the reluctance of the NT Government in providing an education service that the community desires; it would appear that the NT Government is resigned to the assumption that services must necessarily be limited in Homelands whilst it is prepared to provide all essential services and equipment to one-teacher schools, many of which are on rural properties
- demonstrate community stability: the lack of schooling in Homelands creates instability; the stability of rural properties - directly related to the forces of Nature and the whim of world commodity prices - is never questioned by government
- provide an assistant teacher who is expected to work for no pay during the

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trial period: nowhere else are education workers expected to work without pay; notwithstanding serious industrial relations implications, this expectation of the NT Government is contrary to Recommendation 46 of the 'Blanchard' Report: "...the status of Aboriginal Assistant Teachers and Education Workers in Homeland schools be recognised by the provision of better employment conditions..." and Goal 2 of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy: "To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teacher assistants.

The need for education in the Homelands cannot be overstated. While relocation to better serviced areas or enrolment at a boarding school may be an option for students in rural Australia, for Homelands children it would be tantamount to cultural suicide and against the very nature of the Homelands Movement.

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Arnhem Land Homelands - Schooling Facts

In 1987 it was estimated that between 700 and 1,000 children in North-East Arnhem Land had no access to school education (*Return to Country*, page 224). It is difficult to assess the exact numbers of children without access to education though according to the 1996 population census there were 957 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 residing in East Arnhem Land without access to secondary education.

Only the largest Homeland communities have primary school facilities. A community such as Baniyala with a total population of 164 has a school enrolment of 37. Gangan, total population 102, has an enrolment of 28. Schools provide bilingual and bicultural primary schooling. Students aged from 5 to 20 participate in the available Homeland education programs. There is no program of secondary education.

Several smaller communities are without any school facilities, primary or otherwise. Dhuruputjpi has no school even though its total population is 28 including 10 children of compulsory school age.

Families travel with their children to Baniyala to enable their children to attend school. This means some inconvenience and travel for community members as communities are too far away from each other to be travelled between in a day. No funding is provided for the families that must relocate for education (Dhuruputjpi NT community meeting).

Homelands with education services

Homeland	Year school started	Est. pop.*	Av. enrolment	School facilities
Bäniyala	1974	164	37	Two classrooms
Biranybirany	1976	61	14	One classroom
Dhälinybuy	1976	78	17	One classroom
Gängan	1974	102	28	Two classrooms
Garrthalala	1974	32	16	Two classrooms
Dhambaliya	1990	30	12	One classroom
Gurrumuru	1975	50	16	One classroom
Wandawuy	1975	73	18	One classroom

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Homelands without education services

Homeland	Year community established	Est. pop *	Est. no. of 5-15 yr. olds	Schooling history
Balana	1987	0	0	-
Barraratjpi	1974	18	8	Trial but not approved
Bawaka	1975	16	8	Trial but not approved
Buku-ḏäl	1978	26	5	-
Buymarrwuy	1987	28	5	-
Dhuruputjpi	1979	28	10	-
Djarrakpi	1974	10	6	Trial but not approved
Garrapara	1987	?	?	-
Gurka'wuy	1973	9	0	School closed
Miritjaŋay	1990	?	?	-
Naḏayun	?	14	6	Trial but not approved
Naypinya	?	?	?	-
Rurraŋala	1978	16	10	Trial but not approved
Yänunbi	1978	39	13	School closed
Yuḏuyuḏu	1985	12	2	-

* Estimated figures informed by census figures gathered through local health centre visits and clinic services to these communities in 1999.

Source: Nambara Schools Council NT submission.

The 15 East Arnhem Land communities without education services have made various representations to the NT Department of Education to obtain some form of education provision. Specific criteria must be met before the Department will consider establishing a school: a minimum of 12 school age children is required before the Department will consider trialing a school (NT Department of Education 1999). When continuing assured attendance drops below eight, any Homeland Centre school will be closed (NT Department of Education 1993, page 4).

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Other Homelands Education Issues

School resources and teaching staff

In the past 20 plus years this Government has opened new remote schools and Home Land Centre schools; significantly refurbished and upgraded a number of existing schools and is resourcing them at a level comparable to urban schools - and, in many instances, even better (NT Education Minister, Statement to Parliament, 24 November 1999)

One member of the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee inquiry into Indigenous education described the facilities at one NT school as 'appalling' and 'nothing short of a slum' (Senator Carr, transcript 6 August 1999). The departmental representative admitted that the conditions were not adequate. The Committee reported in March 2000 that the NT Department of Education had 'misallocated $90 million of Commonwealth supplementary Indigenous education funding to its core funding' (*Katu Kalpa*, paragraph 1.46).

The Homeland school is likely to be a one or two room facility with little more than tables, chairs and a blackboard. The work of the children adorns the walls of the room but there are few of the other resources found in most Australian schools. There is no television, video technology or computer. There is no library. The school is not air conditioned even though it is located in an area recording some of the highest temperatures in Australia.

I've tried to ask for books, for Bush Books, so that the parents here can teach the children themselves. The father or mother can use those Level 1 or Level 2 books to teach the children, and when they finish with the books, they can send them back. We tried to ask for such a service, but it was very difficult to achieve, so, instead, I have to send my children away to other Homelands, like Banyala and Gangan, for their education. We have not been able to get anything here since this Homeland was established, no trial school, and also no books for the parents to teach the children here. This is what we are worrying about, so at the moment we are here in the Homeland and we send our children to other Homeland schools with our own money. And if we can't get a school here, that is what we will have to keep doing, to send our children away. But we need help from the Department of Education to pay for charter fares for our school children, for bringing them back from school to this Homeland, Dhuruputjpi. These are our worries

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(Dhukal Wirrpanda, Dhuruputjpi, in Nambara Schools Council NT submission).

School staff levels are based on student numbers regardless of the range of ages and abilities among the students. Children from 4 to 17 are considered school age for the purposes of funding. Yet the Homeland schools also cater for a number of students who are older than 17 and have decided to return to school to 'catch up'.

We need proper education, proper teaching and proper teachers. Because if there's no proper teacher, there's no proper learning. Right? We also need to extend the school. Every year we have young children growing up, they growing up become young girls, young boys, growing up, and it should be growing up into a proper school, and a big school with proper teachers (Donald Nurruwunuŋma Marawili, Baniyala, in Nambara Schools Council NT submission).

The East Arnhem Land Homeland assistant teachers instruct the students in Yolŋu, the mother tongue. Visiting teachers assist Homeland teachers with curriculum development and teaching methodology but do not themselves teach Homeland students.

The staffing formula for the Homelands schools is one staff member for each 17 students. The formula for visiting teachers is one staff member for 22 students. The Homeland schools want the NT Government to reconsider this staffing formula and to reduce the number of students per staff member (Gangan NT public meeting).

The 15 East Arnhem Land Homeland communities without school facilities are also without educational resources. Distance Education using the HF radio is not appropriate for Homeland children, partly because English is the language of instruction. They must be instructed in their own language and need to learn English as a second language.

The Homeland schools lack the infrastructure to bring technology such as computers to the communities. Computer technology may in fact provide one essential learning tool for children without schooling facilities.

There's more stuff in the Homelands that we need like computers, things that children need to have ... and to have more say for their school, more training for teachers so they can have more knowledge (Djalinda Ulamari, Dhambaliya, in Nambara Schools Council NT submission).

Many Homeland students have impaired hearing due to middle ear infection. This is a serious impediment to learning. Homeland schools have done what they can to reduce ambient noise in the classrooms by placing mats on the floors

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(Gangan NT public meeting). More is needed, however. These schools lack the sophisticated sound systems and microphones available to some schools where children suffer hearing loss.

Secondary access

The primary problem [in the NT] ... is the under-resourcing of efforts to provide a full and appropriate compulsory and post-compulsory education service to the vast majority of Aboriginal children and young people, and the apparent willingness of both the NT and Commonwealth to tolerate a situation which clearly threatens peoples' capacity to exercise and enjoy their basic human rights. The degree of educational inequality is indisputable, and its impact is felt in the NT every day in high levels of ill-health, unemployment, incarceration and general social distress (Dr Bob Boughton, Menzies School of Health Research, Alice Springs, submission).

The schooling available at the larger Homeland communities is based on a primary curriculum. Secondary education is only available to students if they move with their families to Yirrkala where they can study by correspondence or relocate to Darwin as a boarder. Yet Homeland children follow traditional ways and even young teenagers have custodial responsibilities for their land. To date, very few East Arnhem Land students have relocated for secondary education. Those who do usually withdraw from school and return home within a term or so.

Sometimes it's hard for the Homeland community centres to send their children away; we rather have our own secondary school, we rather have our own primary school, we rather have our own pre-school based at the Homeland centre school, instead of sending children away after primary school to Yirrkala or to another school (Djalinda Ulamari, Dhambaliya, in Nambara Schools Council NT submission).

The inquiry heard that boarding is generally unsuccessful as a solution to the provision of secondary education for remote Indigenous young people.

I worked at a boarding school for 15 years. A lot of children who came to boarding school from remote communities did not last there. They left school and went back because they missed their family and friends. These kids have a strong connection with their community so it is difficult for them when they leave. If they had support groups to help them they might be able to cope better at boarding school (Normanton Qld public meeting).

They are away from their families and their culture, the language is different. At times they are inclined to only stay down in Perth about three months or so and then they come back and they don't want

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Students at Kalkaringi Community Education Centre NT meeting with the inquiry

to go back [to Perth] because they are away from their families. They should be given a chance for education in their own area, within their own language and to speak their own dialects (Tom Birch, Kimberley Land Council, Broome WA hearing).

In the early 1990s the Homeland communities proposed to the NT Government that a secondary school should be established at a central point among the North East Arnhem Land Homeland communities. Such a school would provide boarding facilities during the school week and students would return home for weekends. The distances would not be too great and the children would still feel part of their community (Gangan NT public meeting).

This proposal was rejected in 1996 on the grounds that, as the school would offer short term residential facilities, it was inconsistent with government school policy guidelines. Boarding and residential facilities were considered the domain of the private or independent schooling sector. The Nambara Council remains keen to pursue this proposal with the NT Government (Gangan NT public meeting).

The failure of secondary provision is not exclusive to Arnhem Land. At Daguragu in the Tanami Desert the inquiry was told

Most of the children here do nothing. We need to tell everyone in Australia that we need to look into education here because

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there is no secondary education. Our kids have a primary school at Kalkaringi, but they don't have a high school. So they go to [boarding schools] Kormilda [Darwin] or Yirara [south of Alice Springs] and then they get homesick. They stay for less than a year and then they come back and then they do nothing (Daguragu NT community meeting).

In 1993 it was found that 41% of a sample of 992 Indigenous teenagers in the Southern and Barkly regions of the NT were not in any schooling program at all and only about 20% were in a real secondary education program (in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or Yirara College) (cited by Nicholls 1998).

Education access difficulties extend to other States as well. In the Kimberley region of Western Australia, for example, there are significant numbers of Aboriginal students without school education.

... you've got some kids that just can't get education, especially in the out-station communities up here. We recognise that the government isn't able to provide education services to every little out-station community that is developed or created. But there are some out-stations, for example Crocodile Hole, that have 10 or 20 Aboriginal kids who weren't receiving any education at all for a time. So there's issues like that that need to be looked at from a policy and strategy point of view at some point (Ian Trust, Wunan Council, Kununurra WA hearing).

These kids have tried coming to the Catholic school in Doolboong which is 60 kilometres away and it hasn't worked. There's no school for them so those 16 or 18 kids have been without education for a year (Helen Wright, East Kimberley Aboriginal Education and Training Committee, Kununurra WA hearing).

HREOC Recommendations

Every child has a right to education regardless of location. That education must be accessible and acceptable to the child and the parents. The Commission acknowledges that implementation of this right for Indigenous children in Homeland Centres poses costly and complex problems to education authorities. Failure to provide an education that is genuinely accessible and acceptable, however, is not an option.

Recommendation 5.5: State and Territory education departments in jurisdictions where Indigenous communities have been established on Homeland Centres should ensure that school aged children living in those centres have effective access to education while living at home. Strategies to be vigorously explored in consultation with the proposed National Indigenous

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Education Advisory Council (Recommendation 8.2) include

- culturally-appropriate training for community members to qualify as home or community supervisors/tutors supported by visiting teachers
- provision of relevant and culturally appropriate educational resources including, where necessary and in consultation with the community, physical infrastructure
- establishment or expansion of school term hostels in larger communities servicing Homeland Centres
- development of multi-mode curriculum delivery models utilising Internet, video and paper presentations coupled with tutorial and visiting teacher support and periods of in-residence study at the more centrally located educational institution

Recommendation 5.6 MCEETYA should undertake a national audit of secondary education provision and draw up a national plan of action to ensure effective access to secondary education to Year 12 level for all students in all States and Territories, including by the provision of local senior secondary schools. The measurement of need for senior secondary provision in rural and remote areas should take into account

- the right of every child to education without discrimination of any kind
- the obligation to remedy educational disadvantages revealed by differential retention rates and outcomes
- the inadequacies of distance education modes for some students and, in particular, for students with special needs and for Indigenous students

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6
Vocational Education and Training

Evidence to the inquiry from rural and remote communities describes vocational education as a very welcome addition to school education. VET widens the subject options for students with limited subject choices adding trade and technical subjects.

With the introduction of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses there has been a remarkable change for all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Courses are far more relevant, typically our students are VET students, and they would spend three days a week in school, one day a week in a structured work placement and one day a week involved in TAFE (Alan McLaren, Kununurra District High School Principal, Kununurra WA hearing).

For some students, vocational education is the only significant pathway to employment and further education. This is especially true for students with low literacy skills who prefer to be engaged in technical or trade studies. The availability of VET options is an aspect of the availability of school education because it is increasingly accepted as an essential part of a school curriculum. VET 'forms an integral element of all levels of education' being an element of the right to work as well as of the right to education (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 13*, paragraph 15).

Bamyala students, Arnhem Land NT

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Indulkana, South Australia

From Indulkana Anangu School

Indulkana is a small community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands in the far north west of South Australia. The community supports a population of approximately 300 to 350, with some movement of people between the community and homelands.

Indulkana Anangu School caters for up to 95 Indigenous students from pre-school to secondary age. As with all young people in the Lands, these students face multiple disadvantages in terms of successfully completing their schooling and making the transition to work or further study. For the majority of them, English is a second language.

The Project

Work opportunities in all Anangu Pitjantjatjara communities are extremely limited. Furthermore, many of the conditions that lead to quality structured workplace learning do not exist in these communities. A project officer was employed to carry out an extensive consultation process on the Lands to research and develop a sustainable plan for vocational education and training for young Anangu. From this research, it was agreed to trial some VET programs in 1999.

There is employment potential within some Lands communities for young people to work as radio presenters for the 5NPY network, which broadcasts via satellite across the Lands. Most communities have a radio station and can broadcast within the community, to all communities through 5NPY media, based at Umuwa (the administrative centre for the Lands) or through CAAMA in Alice Springs. Presenters can be paid on a sessional basis or through CDEP for more regular work. Since this presented a real opportunity for employment and also provided a needed community service, it was decided that this would be one of the VET programs we trialed.

The project officer negotiated with Indulkana School to trial the program with its secondary students. Radio 5UV had been involved in training some Anangu community members at the 5NPY station at Umuwa and in training Anangu students from the Adelaide based Wiltja Program [a school term hostel]. The Radio 5UV Training Coordinator was approached to deliver training at Indulkana.

Students undertook modules from Certificate 2 in Community Radio. They learned how to operate the radio station equipment and how to develop a radio program (using a running sheet) which they put to air. When they had completed the course, 5NPY media scheduled a weekly time for Indulkana students to

present their program across the Lands. Not only did students learn practical and literacy skills in a meaningful context, they gained dual accreditation for successful completion of the course, including a unit towards SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education).

With the success of the trial in 1999, the program has been offered again in 2000 to junior secondary students. It is hoped that through offering inclusive, relevant and community based curriculum, these students will be motivated to stay at school.

Outcomes

- Students at Indulkana have maintained interest in the program and it is being offered again in 2000 to junior secondary students.
- Those students who were not regular school attenders were keen to be involved in the program and their attendance improved.
- Most students are able to achieve positive outcomes in this program, not only those who are academically successful. A variety of skills are required, thus catering for a broad range of students.
- Students who successfully completed the course gained dual accreditation, for SACE and towards the Community Radio certificate.
- Two teachers at Indulkana have done the 5UV radio course themselves so their skills are further developed.
- An Aboriginal Education Worker at the school has been trained and assessed on site and is a very good role model and mentor for the students.
- Teachers report that students' literacy, technology and communication skills have been improved, as has their self confidence.
- A strong industry partnership with 5NPY Media has developed. 5NPY has supported the project and in 2000 has upgraded the local station equipment so that programs can be put to air more reliably.
- 5NPY Media has scheduled a regular weekly segment for the students' program.

Challenges

An important challenge we faced was how to make the program sustainable. Whilst funding was provided through the Enterprise & Vocational Education (EVE) team, Department of Education, Training & Employment (DETE), this will not be ongoing. The funding was used to buy some essential equipment, but the greatest expense was paying for a trainer to travel to the Lands. Travel costs are very high and are an expense on top of the training fee. Travelling to the Lands to provide block training also involves a time cost for the trainer. We were lucky that 5UV was committed to this program and agreed to release their trainer for a week at a time. However, for her personally, this required giving up weekends to travel, feeling exhausted at

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the end of the trip and having the pressure of needing to catch up on her other work. For a small community organisation such as 5UV, ongoing commitment to the project would require an upgrading of existing funding.

In developing strategies to overcome sustainability issues, one intention of the program was to link the students with their local Anangu community radio presenters and with 5NPY media. It was hoped that Anangu would be trained so that they could support the students in the long term, without relying on trainers from 5UV in Adelaide to provide all the support. This process is slowly developing, with a number of Anangu being trained through 5NPY. At Indulkana there is a trained radio presenter and her presence will certainly be a factor in the ongoing success of the program.

For students at other communities problems include:

- finding trained Anangu who are able to deliver training at an appropriate level, to meet national competency standards
- availability of trainers to make a regular commitment to supporting students
- transport issues for trained people in one community to travel to a nearby community to offer support
- industry support: reliability of equipment, access to a technician when required and maintenance of equipment
- cultural considerations impacting on the consistency with which programs are implemented eg. funerals, business and sporting events

Another issue was the level of technical support that teachers and Anangu radio presenters could offer the students to sustain the program between the 5UV trainer's visits. As the teachers developed their own skill levels, they were more confident in working with the students. However, the effect of isolation in a remote community cannot be underestimated. It is very difficult to get help when you need it and this can be very frustrating.

Other challenges involved the trainer in adapting her program to suit the needs of the students. A program was first trialed at Fregon (another community in the AP Lands) and this experience gave the trainer an opportunity to develop a methodology which worked with Anangu students and to adapt curriculum materials in terms of literacy levels. She also developed strategies for assisting teachers to support students in between her visits and to integrate the content into the curriculum, including explicit literacy teaching. She made invaluable networks with community members and 5NPY so that the program could be sustained.

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Other VET Issues

VET overview

Students undertaking vocational education and training while still at secondary school comprise an important and rapidly growing component of the vocational education and training sector. School students can access Vocational Education and Training in a number of ways:

- by undertaking vocational subjects which are offered and taught as part of the secondary school curriculum (now known as 'VET in schools')
- by undertaking work experience or work observation studies as part of their secondary school education, or by participating in local 'world of work' programs
- by enrolling in VET subjects which are offered and taught by VET providers
- by commencing an apprenticeship or Traineeship while still attending secondary school. The link between schools and employers is an important aspect of the development of combined VET-secondary education programs and New Apprenticeships (National Centre for Vocational Education Research).

Currently, the majority of students accessing vocational education while at school are at the post compulsory school age of at least 15 years. In 1998 80,000 schools students were enrolled in an accredited VET course: 10% of all school students aged between 15 and 19 (National Centre for Vocational Education Research).

The Australian Qualifications Framework organises VET courses into levels of qualification beginning with basic literacy studies such as the Certificate in General Education for Adults through to complex diploma courses in a variety of technical and vocational areas. The Framework is designed so that students needing to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills can pursue a learning pathway through basic studies through to more advanced studies in pursuit of their chosen career.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools has been seen as being able to solve most of the educationalists' problems. It's focussed on employment, it's real and hands-on, and thanks to the Australian Qualifications Framework it provides a direct pathway to further training ... (Harrison 1999).

Rural opportunities

Vocational Education and Training can be designed to match employment opportunities in rural communities.

When we have funding for housing in remote areas we run pre-employment programs so that the boys and young men can be trained up in the use of hand and power tools before the work begins.

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and the contractors come in. At least when the contractors have gone there is a maintenance team in place after the housing development has gone through.

This is similar with horticulture. These workers are semi-skilled though. They are not skilled to the level of apprenticeship training and this comes back to the level of literacy and numeracy. They can't reach the literacy and numeracy standards. That is the challenge for us (Halls Creek WA public meeting).

TAFE prepares students for work in their region in an environment more supportive than most schools provide.

A lot of people do TAFE in Year 10 and 11. If they do a certain amount of hours at TAFE in their own time they get credit for it in the next year at school. The subjects are only offered if there are enough people enrolled. The subjects are connected with work prospects such as cotton-related subjects. TAFE offers childcare and that sort of stuff (Moree NSW student meeting).

The school at Dover in Tasmania is Australia's southern-most. Dover has 500 residents and there are 150 students at the school from Kindergarten to Year 12. Until 1996 the school only provided for students to Year 10. This meant that senior students realistically, considering Dover's remoteness, had to relocate to attend a secondary college in Hobart. Only one-quarter of them were staying on to Year 11. Dover's VET program has had significant successes as described by Steve Harrison, the Enterprise and Vocational Education Coordinator.

Since the establishment of VET courses at Dover District High School in Tasmania, Year 10 to 11 retention has grown from 25% in 1994 to 90% in 1996. Students enjoy the school-based learning, particularly because of the enterprise education model through which Dover School delivers the off-the-job training, and they especially enjoy the twenty-five days of structured workplace training in industries in which they will later seek employment ...

VET is supposed to be a partnership between school and industry, meeting common needs and most importantly local needs ... VET is not intended to be 'living work-experience' for all students to experience the world of work, but rather a program to meet the needs of specific students who wish to gain employment in specific industries as a starting point, with general work-related competencies as a fall-back position ...

When established correctly VET in Schools programs have had specific benefit to industry which goes beyond the mere corporate duty to the community ...

The VET program at Dover District High School was developed out of negotiation and into partnership with industry to solve two problems, one of which was the school's retention. The other was the difficulty that Tassal, Australia's largest

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Atlantic Salmon grower and processor, had in attracting work-ready base grade employees from the local area. Similar situations were faced by the region's shellfish farmers and hospitality employees while in the commercial fishing industry, where employment had declined but recently stabilised, the skills base had disappeared ...

At a system level the AQF pathways have meant that the aquaculture industry can employ Certificate 11 Trainees who have already achieved two thirds of the training through the Dover School's Certificate 1 program. These trainees are no longer required to be absent from the workplace [for basic classroom lessons] which results in higher productivity and cost-saving to industry. Specific courses such as Elements of Shipboard Safety and Limited Coxswain can be provided through the school-based program providing another financial saving to industry. The Dover School's marine mussel farm, operating alongside the major shellfish producer in the region, has been used by aquaculture students as an R&D opportunity to trial new culturing techniques on behalf of industry. Quality improvement projects funded by the aquaculture industry have involved students in making recommendations to Tassal management which have saved serious money. In the commercial fishing industry the creation of student enterprises has provided for the manufacture of fishing supplies which are otherwise unavailable to local fishermen. Marketing of the products has been in partnership with the Tasmanian Abalone Council, an industry representative body.

In the Hospitality industry the Dover School program has allowed for the establishment of a training focus in the local industry, once characterised by small-business operations. There has been the opportunity to facilitate work-place assessor training for local hospitality employers as well as the opportunity to provide Occupational Health and Safety training to hospitality employees not just school-based trainees (Harrison 1999).

Indigenous students are particularly attracted to VET opportunities.

Currently, the VET sector and its principal component, TAFE, enrols more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than any other post compulsory education provider. The numbers participating are increasing significantly year by year ...

Undertaking VET training clearly improves employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - 80 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with VET qualifications are in the labour force whereas amongst those without a qualification, only 49 per cent are participating in the labour force. However, there is a disparity between the employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people completing VET compared to non-Indigenous people - in 1996 52 per cent of Indigenous VET graduates were in employment the year following their

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graduation compared to 71 per cent of non-Indigenous graduates. However, this situation should not downgrade the importance of VET (ATSIC submission).

Rural inequities

While rural students are able to access VET, the range of subjects is smaller, they have fewer opportunities to participate in work experience and may need to fund their own travel to a neighbouring town to participate in work experience.

We haven't really got very much subjects. When I was on a TAFE course I picked Building and Constructions. I really wanted to do it. But they put me in Office Skills and I've got to put up with it (Brewarrina NSW student meeting).

Work experience

At a time of rural decline, when employment options are diminishing in the bush and work cannot even be ensured on the family farm, students from many rural and remote areas are forced to look further afield for their employment and work experience options. Vocational Education and Training is a potential solution to diminishing opportunities in rural employment. Students can develop skills in growth industries or match their training to meet the needs of their community.

I want to come to school and I want to get a better job in my community. I want to be a Councillor. I'm not sure how long I will be at school but after school I would like to do some VET subjects or go to Batchelor (Nguiu NT student meeting).

At Nguiu in the Tiwi Islands there is no local industry to support work experience for students undertaking vocational studies.

Year 10 students from the Tiwi participate in work experience in Darwin. They spend one week in Darwin doing this and most students enjoy the experience though they find the experience of relocation quite difficult. Teachers travel with the students during the week of work experience (Nguiu NT teachers' meeting).

Transport

The success of a VET program is dependent on meaningful work experience placements where students can consolidate career options and put into practice the skills they have learned in the classroom. Lack of local industry and distance from large regional centres can reduce access to educational opportunities. The only way that some students are able to complete vocational studies is by travelling beyond their community. When the costs of undertaking work experience are prohibitive, students miss out on important educational experiences.

In some instances, special transport funding is available through State and Territory governments to buttress VET funds. However, most of these funds are by way of yearly grants to schools and are not a

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reliable source of support. Funding for transport and accommodation offers the only access to work placements for many poorer students.

VET students are not eligible to travel on government subsidised school bus transport to access their primary institution of training unless that institutions is a school. In one instance in an isolated part of Tasmania, VET students have no other option but to rely on the goodwill of the school bus driver to take them to TAFE. This arrangement is by no means stable and yet this tenuous travel arrangement may mean the difference between students being able to complete their studies or not.

Students completing a New Apprenticeship at school and those engaged in traineeships are entitled to a Commonwealth subsidy in their first year of study. In addition, various State and Territory subsidies are available for students undertaking these courses. However, other VET students are not entitled to Commonwealth or State and Territory funds.

VET data

Size and scope of publicly funded and/or delivered VET, 1998(a)

	Unit	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Training provider locations	No.	673	916	918 (b)	268	346 (c)	127	55	223	3,526
Students (e)	'000	516.9	429.1	260	115	149.2	29	18.5	17.6	1535.2
Annual hours	Million	103.9	86.4	56.5	28.2	21.5	6.8	6.2	3.3	312.7
Hours delivered per training location	'000	154.4	94.3	61.6	105.2	62.1	53.3	111.9	14.6	88.7
Students per training location	No.	768	468	283	429	431	228	336	79	435
% of students studying in rural areas	%	28.9	30.1	30.4	18.4	15.4	49.3	0.0	7.3	27.2
% of students studying in remote areas (d)	%	0.3	0.2	5.4	12.0	0.1	1.0	0.0	41.0	2.5

(a) Includes publicly funded VET programs and fee-for-service provision by public providers. Excludes fee-for-service by private providers.

(b) Includes 287 providers of VET in schools.

(c) Includes 137 providers of VET in schools.

(d) Excludes a small percentage (0.3%) of clients attending a training provider which is outside the State or Territory of the reporting organisation.

(e) Includes VET students of all ages. Students aged between 15 and 19 years make up 25.8% (male) and 20.6% (female) of all VET students Australia wide.

Source: *Report on Government Services 2000*, pages 230-231.

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Commonwealth Budget 2000

- $2 billion over four years to continue support for the popular New Apprenticeships system which is currently providing training for more than 250,000 Australians to
  - allow emerging issues such as skills shortages in some areas to be addressed
  - support innovative approaches to recruitment of New Apprentices in new and challenging markets using group training arrangements
  - offer pre-vocational courses for the most disadvantaged people in the labour market
  - continue measures to ensure employers, young people and the community are informed about the benefits of New Apprenticeships.
- $3.9 billion over four years for vocational education and training through TAFE and user-choice providers, indexed across forward estimates.
- $138.7 million over four years for language, literacy and numeracy training for unemployed people, including migrants.
- $58.4 million over four years for the Job Placement Employment and Training program (JPET).

HREOC Recommendations

Our recommendations aim to enhance VET in school opportunities in rural and remote areas. They have the capacity to improve literacy and numeracy, increase school retention and enhance attainment of marketable skills. In all three areas, rural and remote students, on average, have fallen behind their urban counterparts.

Recommendation 9.3. All education and training providers should collaborate to develop local partnerships with business and other government and non-government agencies and to offer VET opportunities to all secondary-aged students.

Recommendation 9.4 State and Territory governments should ensure that secondary students enrolled in VET courses requiring work experience placements receive the same travel and accommodation allowances as are provided to students engaged in traineeships and apprenticeships based on the same eligibility criteria. MCEETYA should encourage national adoption of best practice in the provision of these allowances.

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7 Language and Culture

School can be an alien and daunting place for the many ... young children who begin class work in a language different from their own. Compelled to adopt a second language when they are as young as four, five or six, these children must give up an entire universe of meaning for an unfamiliar one. They may also come to believe that the language they have known from birth is inferior to the language of school. In learning complex subjects such as mathematics and reading, they must undergo one of the greatest challenges they will ever face, yet the linguistic skills on which much of their cognitive faculties rest have suddenly been deemed irrelevant to the task at hand.

As these building blocks of knowledge crumble, so can the children's self-esteem and sense of identity. It is no wonder that so many of them struggle to stay in school and succeed ...

Experts increasingly recognize how important it is for children to use their mother tongue when they begin school. Use of this tongue validates their experiences. It helps them learn about the nature of language itself and how to use language to make sense of the world, including all aspects of the school curriculum.

The mother tongue is an essential foundation for learning (Bellamy 1999, page 44).

Skin group banner at Kalkaringi Community Education Centre NT

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Kununurra, WA

From Ian Trust, Wunan Council, and Alan McLaren, High School Principal, Kununurra.

For Indigenous students beginning school in Kununurra there are many challenges. Some children living in outlying communities speak the traditional languages of the Miriwoong and the Gajirrawoong and the Marrinhpatha people. Many children living in the township of Kununurra speak Kriol at home (a dialect combining traditional language and English). For those students who have not attended any early childhood programs, school may be their first introduction to Standard English.

Aboriginal students comprise a clear majority of 69% of the (Kimberley) school population and given the age profile of the region the trend is that Aboriginal children will continue to be the majority of enrolments ... This has major implications for the priority that's placed on education in the region; despite all the efforts of the education providers they have clearly not adapted to the needs of the Aboriginal population.

The thing that I would make very clear is that language is also the major barrier for Aboriginal students and more language support is essential. Students that in Perth would be deemed to be ESL or English Second Language students are not recognised as such if they're Aboriginal.

Aboriginal children come to school armed with a totally different set of values to the non-Aboriginal kids. Once they arrive at school they're confronted with different culture, different language, different teaching staff, different values, different expectations and quite alien class management techniques. Many have difficulty fitting in and coping.

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Other Language and Culture Issues

Cultural accessibility

[C]ultural differences do impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning processes. Historically, schools have failed to reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and learning styles. Consequently, Indigenous students enter an educational institution where they and their parents have limited or no experience and if any experience, it is usually a negative one. Often the value systems and style of the institutions do not reflect the values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and do not always take account of the home experience of Indigenous students. In addition, the language used in educational institutions is often not the everyday language of Indigenous students.

Cultural differences are also evident in the links between culture and cognitive style, in the forms of culturally preferred knowledge, in cross-cultural communication and in culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies (ATSIC submission).

In 1998 the Constitutional Convention of the Combined Aboriginal Nations of Central Australia developed the *Kalkaringi Statement* which provides

That there must be recognition of the right of Aboriginal communities to establish and control our own educational institutions, providing education in our own languages, in ways appropriate to our cultural methods of teaching and learning (page 4).

Apart from some notable exceptions, most government schools in Australia provide a Western model of education. They follow a Western calendar, celebrate Christian holidays and provide education that reinforces Western culture and ways of learning.

There is something like 30 odd languages left in the Kimberley at this time. So we have such a diverse cultural group of people. Children attending school are taught Kartiya [European] ways of learning and culture. There's no time left for Aboriginal culture. This is leading to the continuation of the process of assimilation. We need our own schools. [W]e want two days of Kartiya business and three days of Aboriginal business and Aboriginal elders must be respected as educators. There ought to be development of bicultural and multicultural approach to education so that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways are taught (Peter Yu, Kimberley Land Council, Broome WA hearing).

Law and culture

[Some attend] irregularly and I think part of the beginning of that is that

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they're starting to get near 12 and 13, the Law stage, when the issue of relationships between male and female becomes sensitive (Sr Marianne Zeinstra, St Joseph's Primary School, Kununurra WA hearing).

After initiation there are strict rules that govern communication between the sexes and the skin groups for some Indigenous young people. A school that groups students by age and has mixed-sex classes offends cultural norms in some communities. At Nguiu on Bathurst Island girls and boys are segregated for secondary education in keeping with Law. Students at this school learn together in skin groups rather than age groups.

[T]he Tiwi people, with our culture, asked that classes be segregated because brothers and sisters are not allowed to talk to each other. That is why we have two schools. At Murrupartinyanuwa Community School (MCS) we have boys from preschool up to Year 5 then they move to Xavier. The girls stay on at MCS and do the bridging courses and now for the first time they are doing the Junior Secondary School Curriculum in single sex classes. The classes for the girls are at Xavier but they are single sex classes. We have this avoidance relationship (Zita Puruntatameri, Murrupartinyanuwa Community School Principal, Nguiu NT community meeting).

How children are regarded in Aboriginal communities is something that a lot of teachers come into the school situation with kids not understanding that in many instances the kids are expected to be treated as adults ... (John Bucknall, Aboriginal Independent Schools Unit, Broome WA hearing).

Western value systems and Western education reinforce the notion that at this age group, young people are not yet adults. The structures of discipline, paternalism and control can be very insulting to young people who may consider themselves adults (Daguragu NT community meeting).

Single sex classes work well at the school though due to relatively small numbers of children, it is often impractical to run these classes. Culture and tradition dictates that male teachers should teach male children and visa-versa ... there is often a real shortage of male staff in general (Kalkaringi NT community meeting).

At the age of Law it is also appropriate for Indigenous students in some communities to be taught by someone of the same sex. At the Barramundi School in Kununurra the students are taught by staff and community elders of the appropriate gender.

... the men's units and the women's units at Barramundi have links back with Law men and Law women in the community (Sr Marianne Zeinstra, St Joseph's Primary School, Kununurra WA hearing).

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Indigenous language teaching

My sister teaches gifted children and if she gets a kid who walks in and can speak two languages in grade one or two they are absolutely ecstatic. They have a genius on their hands. Out in the community schools they have kids that speak five or six languages fluently, none of them being English. We sit them in a classroom, teach them English and then say these kids are a bit thick and off the mark. It is an extraordinary analogy (Bush Talks meeting in South Hedland WA).

Cummings in 1989 stated 'the roots of the term education imply drawing out children's potential, making them more than they were. However, when students come to school fluent in their primary language and they leave school essentially monolingual in English we have negated the meaning of the word education because we have made them less than they were' (quoted by Gwen Bucknall, Notre Dame University, Broome WA hearing).

According to the 1996 Census, 13.3% of all Australian Indigenous people reported speaking an Indigenous language at home. The majority live in remote areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999).

Indigenous languages can be supported and enhanced at school in different ways. Bilingual education, now known as '2 way learning' in the Northern Territory where it is most prevalent, teaches in the local Indigenous languages and literacy in Indigenous language is an integral part of the education program. English is taught as a second language. Bilingual education offers mother-tongue-speaking Indigenous children real access to education because it reinforces language, culture and ways of understanding the world consistent with those at home. The schooling experience is otherwise foreign in language, concepts and values.

Other Indigenous language programs are

- language maintenance for first language speakers
- Languages Other Than English (LOTE)
- language revival
- language awareness programs (which do not teach Indigenous languages).

Northern Territory

The majority of the Northern Territory Indigenous population, 61% - speak an Indigenous language as their main language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998a, page 55). In total 29 NT government and non-government schools receive funding to support various Indigenous language and culture projects. However, only 12 NT schools are officially '2 way learning' schools, (formerly bilingual schools), receiving special funding to resource Indigenous language, culture and ESL programs. The 12 schools are supported by teacher linguists, regional

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linguists and literacy workers to support and resource the process of teaching literacy in both languages. The Department's decision to phase out bilingual program funding on 14 February 2000 will mean the gradual withdrawal of funding for specialist staff and Indigenous language publication centres for the 12 remaining 'bilingual' schools. The Departmental funding for such resources will continue until the end of the contractual period negotiated with each bilingual school. Most schools had short term funding arrangements of up to three years. Already eight schools have lost bilingual education resource funding. While all of these schools will continue to deliver education programs in the mother tongue, they will have reduced capacity and resources to provide Indigenous language literacy support.

What I saw happen [following the introduction of bilingual education at Nguiu] was the self-esteem and the ownership not only of their language but the beginning of the ownership of their school, the difference in the children - suddenly they had a language that they could speak in and they could write in, and to me, these are the educational values that we should be looking at at this time ... (Sister Anne Gardiner, Darwin hearing)

Until February 2000 the bilingual program in the NT was successful in maintaining Indigenous languages and promoting literacy in the first language as well as English.

It is considered that bilingual programs contain significant educational advantages for Indigenous persons whose first language is not English. A bilingual program implicitly recognises and respects the individual's culture and language. In this regard the school or educational setting becomes an agent of cultural continuity. The educational curriculum becomes more accessible to the student who is operating in a familiar language area and therefore feels more secure. The student's language identifies them with their language group and the use of their own language enhances their self-confidence and self-concepts that improves their educational prospects (ATSIC submission)

The issue of bilingual education is one that has a lot of significance and importance for ATSIC, and we see that as an area that states really should be providing much more leadership in allowing communities to make a decision about how they integrate languages into the education process. ATSIC's view, has been that it is a community's decision on how they want to do it because different communities want to approach education in different ways. Some want to focus on bilingual - being taught in their own language first as a vehicle into learning English, and others would rather go straight into English (Lewis Hawke, ATSIC, Melbourne hearing)

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Queensland

In Queensland 15% of Indigenous households reported speaking an Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998b, page 55). Fourteen schools, primarily in the Cape, Gulf and Torres Strait, currently have Indigenous language programs. These programs are based on the 'home community' language approach that incorporates acknowledgment of the local clan languages within the school curriculum and provides language maintenance and language revival programs. A number of communities including Aurukun and Pormpuraaw had bilingual programs during the 1970s but these have become home/community language programs as the English language has progressively infiltrated these communities and reduced first language proficiency amongst the younger generation.

Thirty-five Queensland schools have implemented elements of community language revival and maintenance programs in the school curriculum. Since 1997, two schools on Cape York have been involved in the development of pilot Indigenous LOTE (Languages Other Than English) programs. Policy direction in Queensland devolves program responsibility to schools. Language programs are funded through the Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP).

Western Australia

In rural areas of Western Australia, 51% of Indigenous people reported speaking an Indigenous language at home. The total number of Indigenous language speakers in the State was 8,673 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998c, page 58). In 1997 there were 25 Indigenous languages being taught as LOTE in 31 of the State's 848 schools (Aboriginal Education and Training Council of WA 1998, page 13). This represents a small percentage of the overall LOTE program given that more than 700 WA schools teach a language other than English (MCEETYA 1997, page 9).

A number of WA initiatives recognise language and integrate it into the learning process.

We actually have a literacy strategy for which Aboriginal literacy is a key component, and the sorts of initiatives that we are putting in place there include an Aboriginal English policy, which is actually about ensuring that all teachers recognise and value Aboriginal English as a dialect of English that is spoken by Aboriginal students. ... And alongside that is a professional development program, the ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning, which is targeting schools statewide, using Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal personnel, and is really about the delivery of an inclusive curriculum for the benefit of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Built into that is

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the acceptance of Aboriginal English as being a legitimate form of communication (Jayne Johnston, EDWA Perth hearing).

The WA Catholic Education Office has developed a video and a resource book known as *The Feliks Approach* (1994) to assist students to distinguish Kriol from Standard English. This resource provides a bi-dialectical approach, valuing both languages.

New South Wales

Less than 1% of the NSW Indigenous population reported speaking an Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998d, page 53). In 1999 Department funded Indigenous community language programs operated in primary schools in the rural areas of Broken Hill (Gol Gol) and Boggabilla (Gamilaraay). The Commonwealth funds six NSW schools to deliver Indigenous language programs through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP). IESIP funding was offered but not taken up by an additional fifteen NSW schools (NSW Department of Education and Training submission, page 49; Nicole Simone, Aboriginal Programs Unit DET NSW, personal communication).

In Victoria, 1.1% of the Indigenous population reported speaking an Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998e, page 55). During 1999, Grassmere Primary School and Nowa Nowa Primary School in Victoria taught Koori languages as LOTE to 95 students (Department of Education, Employment and Training Victoria).

South Australia

Slightly more than 20% of non-urban Indigenous South Australians speak an Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998g, page 64). Forty-seven South Australian schools and pre-schools offer 62 Aboriginal language programs between them, encompassing nine languages. Of these, the five schools at Oak Valley, Augusta Park, Carlton, Alberton and Fregon provide instruction in traditional languages to students who speak an Indigenous language as their first language.

Tasmania

In Tasmania 0.2% of the Indigenous population reported speaking an Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998f, page 55). Cape Barren Island offers the only Indigenous language program in the State. It is being delivered to a small group of approximately ten students.

Qualified staff

... we get our elders involved in teaching our children, our children learn Walpiri, learn about our culture and it makes them proud of themselves, of who they

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are. It is really important that bilingual education is not stopped. It shouldn't be stopped (Lajamanu NT community meeting).

Along came these elders and told stories, ancient stories, of their own lives and experience, which talked about knowledge production in a way which is completely different from the normal transmission metaphor that we use in the west (Dr Michael Christie, NT University, Darwin hearing).

Appropriate education requires appropriate staffing. Indigenous teaching and administrative staff are essential to the success of the learning process for many Indigenous students. Indigenous teaching staff are not represented in the same proportions as Indigenous students.

According to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee current data on the number of Indigenous teaching staff is unreliable (*Katu Kalpa* 2000, paragraph 6.13). The 1991 Census indicates that there were 572 Indigenous people employed as school teachers, only 0.3% of the teaching workforce at that time. In 1996 3.2% of the total student population were Indigenous and the numbers are increasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998, pages 3 and 64).

In 1994 there were almost 1,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) in Australia (*Katu Kalpa* 2000, paragraph 6.43). Their role is to assist the classroom teacher by providing culturally appropriate education material in the classroom and liaising between the school, the students and the Indigenous community. The role is complex as the AIEW has responsibility for translating information across at least two languages and cultures.

Indigenous representation is required at all levels within the education system.

Despite the fact that Aboriginal students comprise 69% of enrolments in the East Kimberley, this is not reflected by the staffing in the region. The EDWA District Education Office employs only 3 Aboriginal staff members out of 26 (Ian Trust, Wunan Council East Kimberley, Kununurra WA hearing).

Staff training should also be targeted to the needs of the students. In particular, staff at Indigenous community schools need to be trained in English as a Second Language method.

Our teaching programs need to reflect the language requirements of Aboriginal students. This means equipping our teachers as far as possible with the special skills involved in ESL teaching (NT Education Minister, Statement to Parliament, 24 November 1999).

There's no specialised recruitment of teachers, no intensive teacher-training packages for teachers working in the

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region, little extra cross-cultural training, and in the last few years only a few attempts have been made to phase in a more relevant curriculum (Ian Trust, Wunun Council East Kimberley, Kununurra WA hearing).

Transition from primary to secondary school

... it was recognised throughout the review that students who were perhaps attending school or not making a decision to articulate on into the secondary arena felt that the programs were not culturally inclusive. The department is responding through providing a policy which will encourage teachers out there to undertake professional development and training based on second language pedagogy and cross-cultural pedagogy (Shane Williams, Education Queensland, Brisbane hearing).

The most serious issue in terms of education access is the inability of secondary education to cater adequately for the needs of Indigenous students. Indigenous students in rural areas across Australia are not making the transition from primary to secondary schools. According to available statistics, those who do make that transition generally leave school during the junior secondary years.

[T]he percentage of Indigenous youth who did not complete Year 10 in 1994 was 36.3% for all of Australia. But the non-completion rate can be far greater for rural and remote locations, for example, 63.4% for Bourke and 84.2% for Aputula (David Curtis, ATSIC Commissioner, Melbourne hearing).

In Kununurra WA, for example, there is a high attrition rate of Indigenous students in the transition from primary to secondary school.

Another feeling that we have just heard from talking to people around is that the approaches of the Catholic school here, St Joseph's Primary School, and the High School are very, very different. A few people have raised the issue that if there's going to be a St Joseph's Primary School there should be a secondary continuation of it, rather than having the kids go to St Joseph's to Grade 7 and then have to go across to the mainstream system and have this problem of the transition from two totally different school systems (Helen Wright, East Kimberley Aboriginal Education and Training Committee, Kununurra WA hearing).

Indigenous students in Kununurra have the option of attending a small non-mainstream secondary school, the Barramundi School. However, this option is only available once the student has turned 13 and the school has a limited number of places, only 20 in total.

In 1996 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that 80% of 16 year old Australian students are still in school

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(Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996). The rate of non-completion for Indigenous students is nearly double that of the national average.

In terms of actual numbers of Indigenous students progressing from primary to secondary school, more than one-third of students beginning primary school do not continue to Year 8. Across Australia, the number of Indigenous male students beginning school in Year 1 was 5,598. By Year 8 the number still at school was 3,957 (only 70.7%). Of Indigenous females the number at Year 1 was 5,310 and by Year 8 it had decreased to 3,877. This is a 26% drop in school attendance (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996).

Other non-English speaking students

Several years ago, an immigrant family, again in the Riverina, arrived at the school with 3 or 4 children. The school didn't have any ESL staff, and the principal took the easy way out by telling the children to stay at home in the mornings because that was where the real subjects were, and only come after lunch because there's less important subjects taught there, and English isn't so important. That was rectified quickly when it came to our notice (Edna McGill, Ethnic Communities Council, NSW hearing, page 60).

Access to education is affected for all non-English speaking students when schools do not have the resources or the staff to support students in English as a Second Language learning. Both the NT Department of Education and the Education Department of WA have now made ESL teacher training and recruitment a priority.

HREOC Recommendations

Our recommendations aim to dismantle the language and cultural barriers to education for Indigenous children in particular. The enhancement of Indigenous participation in education decision making and delivery is a key strategy to this end. There must also be adequate funding for expanded language education and resources and the training and employment of Indigenous staff.

Recommendation 5.13: All education providers should recognise Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers as essential to the effective education of Indigenous students. Their numbers should be substantially increased in all school systems and their terms and conditions of employment should be improved to reflect their significance, expertise and experience.

Recommendation 6.19: All education providers should progressively introduce and accredit regional Indigenous languages to be available as LOTE options and for use in bilingual education programs.

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Recommendation 6.20a: The Commonwealth, as advised by the National Indigenous Education Advisory Council (see Recommendation 8.2), should fund appropriate Indigenous organisations in all regions to record, preserve and teach the Indigenous languages of the region and to resource all school communities desirous of teaching an Indigenous language or providing a bilingual education program.

Recommendation 6.20b: These organisations should also be funded to co-ordinate the provision of advisory services to education providers on school curriculum, materials and language resource development. Wherever possible, local Indigenous experts should be employed to provide this advice.

Recommendation 8.1: Five basic principles should form the basis for future planning and provision of education to Indigenous students throughout Australia.

1. The Indigenous community has a right to self-determination within the education system. This means that Indigenous parents and communities should be involved in education decision-making at all levels from the individual school level to the levels of regional/district, State/Territory and Commonwealth policy and implementation. An Indigenous community wishing to manage and determine the provision of schooling should be supported and facilitated to do so.

2. Indigenous children have a right to be educated in and about their own language, culture and history. The way in which this right is implemented, including the choice of educators, should be determined by the local Indigenous community.

3. Indigenous children have a right to an education which prepares them for full participation in Australian society and equips them, in particular, with English literacy and numeracy proficiency.

4. Indigenous communities have a right to transmit their language and culture and the education system should respect the knowledge, expertise and experience of Indigenous community members and ensure that every opportunity is provided for its use in the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

5. Education needs should be evaluated in their social context and education planning and provision should be integrated with planning and provision of health services, housing, essential services, employment opportunities and other infrastructure.

Recommendation 8.2: The Commonwealth should establish and

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resource adequately and appropriately a National Indigenous Education Advisory Council to advise MCEETYA on Indigenous education needs and policy. The Council should be made up of representatives of relevant Indigenous organisations, including ATSIC and State and Territory Indigenous education consultative groups.

Recommendation 8.3: All education providers should ensure that their teaching methods, learning materials and assessment and reporting strategies meet the twin objectives of preparing Indigenous students for education and training, the workplace and full participation in the broader community and of valuing Indigenous identity, history, culture, values and languages.

Recommendation 8.4: All teacher training institutions should offer modules on

- Indigenous learning styles and how to implement them
- Indigenous culture and history
- Indigenous community rights and aspirations

These modules should be designed and delivered in consultation with the proposed Indigenous advisory services (see Recommendation 6.20b) and regional or State/Territory Indigenous education advisory groups to ensure their accuracy, relevance to the State/Territory or region and acceptability to local Indigenous people.

Recommendation 8.5: All serving teachers should have ready access to professional development in these modules and successful completion of these modules should be required for those teaching or preparing to teach in Indigenous communities and for those with a proportion of Indigenous students.

Recommendation 8.7a: DETYA should encourage all ASSPA committees to develop proposals for incorporating more local Indigenous people into the school program and to submit funding applications.

Recommendation 8.7b: MCEETYA's Rural School Communities Taskforce (see Recommendation 4.4) should review school funding arrangements to identify ways of funding significantly increased local Indigenous participation in student support roles.

Recommendation 9.1: All education providers should enable schools to provide maximum flexibility in responding to the educational and other needs of the local community. The following should be capable of local negotiation:

- enabling classes to be structured on culturally appropriate lines such as by reference to clan affiliation rather than age cohorts
- enabling remote schools to remain open with adequate supervision throughout the year, including supervision by

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community officials other than school staff when needed

- enabling variation to the school day and the school year, terms and holiday timetable
- enabling schools to open outside school hours to provide a resource to other community members, supervised by school staff or other community officials
- enabling sporting, recreational, library and computer equipment to be available to community members.

Recommendation 9.2a: All education providers should ensure to each rural and remote school community sufficient flexibility to enable local or regional content to be introduced while still achieving established learning outcomes.

Recommendation 9.2b: The Commonwealth should establish a rural curriculum development fund to enable the development of curriculum components with local content and relevance in all country regions.

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8 School Term Hostels

Government provided hostels are needed in rural centres to accommodate secondary students during the weekdays so that they can return home on weekends. This strategy would have several benefits - social contact with other students, greater curriculum breadth and choice provided by the bigger school population as well as greater direct support from teachers working with students (Queensland Teachers' Union submission).

Providing secondary education to isolated children is a financial, social and geographic challenge for families and for governments. Families have few options and all are dependent on the circumstances of the family and the availability of resources. They include

- relocate family to an area with a secondary school
- set up a second home for the duration of secondary schooling (one parent relocates with child/ren)
- send child/ren to boarding school
- send child/ren to a school term hostel co-located with a government school
- send child/ren to board with family or friends
- access distance education.

Large numbers of isolated children relocate for secondary education. Some of them attend independent boarding schools. Others find accommodation in school term hostels and attend a nearby government school. Boarding at a regional school term hostel will be much cheaper than boarding school if the student attends a government high school, because tuition fees are much lower or are not charged at all.

For many isolated children, the school term hostel provides the only affordable access to a satisfactory secondary education.

There has been great concern over the future viability of hostels, school-term hostels, and the Minister has just announced, as a result of the last MCEETYA meeting, additional emergency funding for hostels that are below 50% capacity at the moment (Barbara Lough, Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW), Canberra hearing).

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Blackall, Queensland

From Jan Gall, Blackall.

The original Blackall Student Hostel, owned and operated by the Blackall Shire Council, was established in 1961, providing accommodation for 48 students. As a result of the serious economic situation of primary industry and the subsequent decline of the rural population, demand for the hostel dwindled through the late 70s and early 80s making it an unviable proposition.

In 1988, a smaller building was acquired, operated under the auspices of the Uniting Church Frontier Services. It caters for 10 students living together as a family with house parents. Its management reverted to a local committee in 1994 who, with a grant from Education Queensland, were able to purchase the property in 1999 so that the entire responsibility now rests with the local community.

The hostel operates on a 5-day week basis taking students from Years 1 to 12 who are able to access either the State or Catholic school. Boarders are made up of primary and secondary students from properties in the district and secondary students from the town of Tambo who are unable to access Years 11 and 12 in their home town. Enrolment numbers over the past decade have varied from 7 to 11.

Without the hostel in Blackall, these students would either discontinue their education or move with their families to more closely settled areas.

Like all Queensland hostels, we receive recurrent funding from Education Queensland at a per capita rate of $996 per annum. We are also assisted by both Blackall and Tambo Shire Councils on a per capita basis.

In the past two years, we have been able to utilise the 50% Capital Grant monies from the Queensland Government in order to acquire and upgrade the facilities.

Fees for 1999 were $4,600 per year for primary students and $5,000 per year for secondary students. As the majority of students are geographically isolated, their parents receive financial assistance under the Commonwealth Government AIC Scheme of $3,500 per year free of means test, and more subject to parental income. They are also eligible for State Government travel allowances.

I believe that school term hostels should be encouraged to continue operating because they provide a means of access to education which is often the only appropriate choice for families living in rural and remote areas. It would seem that their future is in jeopardy, partly because of the decline in the population of the areas they serve, partly because of a lack of expertise amongst the (mostly)

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volunteer workers trying to maintain them, but most particularly because of the serious lack of financial resources to ensure their continuing operation.

I do not support the concept of assisting only the larger or 'regional' hostels because:

(1) they do not necessarily provide for all the students in the region. Eg. I do not believe that any of the 9 students who resided at the Blackall Student Hostel this year would be enrolled at (say) the Longreach Student Hostel if Blackall's were to close. Their parents have chosen 5-day boarding because they wish to keep their children close to home - indeed to have them at home for three nights a week, and the longer distance to (say) Longreach would preclude this arrangement. Such students would have their education curtailed, or else the families would leave the region in order to settle in a more closely settled area where their children could commute to school daily.

(2) Student hostel boarders boost the number of students at small High Schools such as Blackall thereby enabling them to enjoy increased staffing levels and subject choices which is of benefit to all students at the school.

(3) Smaller hostels are not necessarily the ones experiencing such financial difficulties as to be in danger of closing. This was illustrated with the recent Federal Government Emergency Funding. The Blackall Student Hostel has survived only because it rationalised its operations in the 1980s, moving into smaller premises and cutting staff numbers, and continues to operate with very strict budget control.

(4) The smaller hostels with a capacity of 10 to 12 students living in a family situation with house parents provide a more homelike setting for students who must live away from their own homes than the larger, more institutionalised hostels. This was a recommendation of the Uniting Church Frontier Services study.

(5) The smaller hostels allow for economies of scale and utilise buildings which can revert back to residential property and vice versa, making it more feasible to open or close them according to demand.

Recurrent funding

Governments subsidise school transport services for families whose children have daily access to school; they subsidise the operation of boarding schools for those in a position to utilise them; so it would seem quite reasonable to expect ongoing Government support for the operation of school term hostels.

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Ad hoc funding such as the recent Emergency Funding of school term hostels is not the answer. It would seem to me to have merely postponed the closure of some uneconomic operations, provided a windfall for others, and left small but prudent operations such as Blackall's out in the cold.

I believe that recurrent funding needs to be guaranteed on an annual basis, and would recommend that it be paid on a per capita basis but that it include both a maximum and minimum payment according to enrolment numbers. For example, the maximum for 20 or more and the minimum for 10 or less.

The management committee in Blackall recognises that it is fortunate in receiving the subsidies it does. With careful budgeting, this enables us to meet the necessary expenses each year, but only if our enrolment numbers are at or close to our maximum of 10.

We have noted that there is a cap on the General Purpose Grant of a maximum rate equivalent to that for 20 students per annum. We would recommend that there also be a minimum rate equivalent to that for 10 students per annum. This would be of immeasurable assistance to the smaller hostels such as Blackall's as we face the same basic expenses for wages and associated costs, maintenance of the building, and administration expenses whether we have an enrolment of 10 or 6 (and we cannot reasonably be expected to maintain full enrolment every year.)

Hostels operated by shire councils, church bodies etc. have professional staff to carry out their administration whilst community based committees usually rely entirely on volunteers (mostly amateurs) to undertake these duties. This has become an increasingly onerous task and the legal implications have increased to such an extent that I believe it is now imperative to employ professionals to ensure that all the regulations are met.

As this imposes yet another strain on hostels' limited financial resources, it will be necessary to build this cost into any future funding arrangements.

Capital funding

For school term hostels that are struggling to remain open, the cost of maintaining the facilities is a serious impost and upgrading them is not even a consideration. Yet it is imperative that the facilities are well maintained even if only to meet health and safety requirements, and most important that they be constantly improved to keep up with community standards. A well equipped and maintained hostel is far more likely to attract students AND staff than one that has only basic upkeep and lacks modern conveniences.

For struggling management committees, it is difficult to raise 50% of small

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projects and impossible for major ones. Our committee in Blackall was able to utilise a major grant in 1998/9 only because we managed to secure half the monies needed through the Jupiters Trust Community Benefit Fund.

Tax liability

When our committee purchased the hostel premises this year we objected to being charged stamp duty, but were advised that we were not eligible for exemption because the hostel is 'not directly involved in the education of students'.

It needs to be recognised that, for some students, hostels are an essential part of their educational infrastructure just as much as the boarding sections of private schools.

Family income support

All school term hostels of which I am aware make every endeavour to keep their fees to a minimum with many families believing that they should not have to pay more in fees than the amount of AIC Allowance they receive. This is a serious impediment to the proper management of school term hostels because it is only through monies spent to continually upgrade the facility and offer attractive salary packages that hostels can attract both competent staff and satisfactory enrolments.

Access to education is a very real and necessary cost for geographically isolated families and, without improved financial assistance for them, hostels will continue to flounder because of the need to keep fees very low.

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Other School Term Hostel Issues

The school term hostel is most commonly a small private operation located within the vicinity of a government or independent secondary school. Meals and supervision are provided at the hostel by staff not employed through the school. This distinguishes the school term hostel from the boarding school.

Non-government boarding schools generally cost more, often considerably more, than school term hostels and they are typically located in large regional centres and cities.

The advantage of *regional* hostels is that in many instances they are located within travelling distance of the rural family home. This means that parents can visit their children on weekends or students can return home at regular intervals. The benefits in this respect are both social and financial. The cost of flying children home from distant locations is prohibitive for many families.

For Indigenous students the regional hostel allows them to stay within their language and skin group.

We want our school at Katherine to be a boarding school that our kids could stay at. Katherine is very close. It would be the best place for the school. There are Gurindji people living in Katherine and so it is better for our kids. Yirara [boarding school south of Alice Springs] is too far away for us to see our children.

If the children are homesick it is only a four hour drive [to Katherine] from here to see them. And there is family there. The Gurindji and the Walpiri people who live in Katherine are family. When the kids are in Katherine we have people and family travelling there all the time. They feel closer to their family and their traditional land (Daguragu NT community meeting).

School term hostels

	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	WA
Government run - 7 days per week		1	2	2	1	8
Non-government run - 7 days per week	7	1	9	2	1	3
Government run - 5 days per week			1			
Non-government run - 5 days per week			4	1	4	1

Source: Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Australia), personal communication.

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The success of any school term hostel is dependent on a number of factors.

... hostels for a short period of time will be very popular and well supported, but it only takes one or two things to go wrong in either the school or the hostel for the old bush grapevine to work, and then suddenly the numbers drop away at the school so the numbers drop away at the hostel. Or something goes wrong at the hostel, the quality of staff, people aren't happy with the supervision or the experiences that their children are having, so they take their children away from the hostel, numbers at the school decline. So I think hostels ... that are well thought through and well supported by the community are a very important part of providing infrastructure to support rural education.

I think boarding schools have their role to play, but boarding schools support a particular philosophical framework and a particular education ethos. If you want to access a state school system and you believe that that's an appropriate education for your child in a school that can deliver the curriculum that really meets your kids' needs, you will have a robust and healthy hostel, and I think you'd be able to identify those. Where the hostels are failing you would need to look very closely at what's happening in the school. One depends on the other.

So it's a fairly tenuous relationship, depending on the community, the stability of the community, the stability of the teachers, the turnover of the teachers (Megan McNicholl, Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Australia), Canberra hearing).

The costs

The average boarding fee for 1999 as calculated by the federal council of ICPA – we calculate this figure every year from all the boarding schools, government, non-government and the school-term hostels around Australia – is $7,622. We can't take into consideration the cost of private board because we don't have access to those figures (Barbara Lough, Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW), Canberra hearing).

Evidence to the inquiry suggests a significant proportion of isolated families are unable to meet the costs of boarding fees or they do so under severe financial constraints. Despite federal subsidies, notably Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC), many families do not have the financial capacity to cover costs. In some instances, hostels do assist families unable to pay immediately or in full.

In many cases these schools have been subsidising our rural students to keep them at school. They have made allowances where people pay off their fees years after they leave school. They have provided special scholarships, particularly if they are students from a rural area and they cannot access the

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AIC, because they recognise the real problems that some families face, many families face (Barbara Lough, Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW), Canberra hearing)

Unfortunately many hostels struggle with their own finances and viability. Small hostels may be in no position to postpone payment.

The costs of boarding include more than the fees. In most States and Territories parents have the additional costs of transport to bring their children home or to visit them during holidays. There is also the cost of maintaining contact by telephone.

There are so many costs involved in sending a child to boarding school. First there is the cost of boarding and tuition, uniforms and books. Most schools have a building fund which, although voluntary, you are encouraged to contribute to. Then there are Parents & Friends fees, the school annual magazine, excursions and phone calls (Raelene Hall, via Meekatharra WA, submission).

A lot of parents pull their children out of [boarding] school after Year 10 because they can no longer afford to educate their children, even with the Government assistance that is currently available. This is especially the case with families on properties who need the children at home to help run the property (Bush Talks meeting in Boulia Qld).

There should be more subsidies for remote parents to visit their children at boarding school, at least in the first year. Many parents find it too difficult financially to travel to school for major events such as speech nights, sport days and so on (Bush Talks meeting in Boulia Qld).

The subsidies

When the Assistance for Isolated Children was originally brought in, in 1973, it was set at 35% of the average boarding fee because ICPA acknowledges it costs money to keep your children at home, so we have never asked for 100% of the average boarding fee (Barbara Lough, Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW), Canberra hearing).

Commonwealth Budget 2000

In the May 2000 Budget the Commonwealth announced increases to the AIC Boarding Allowance and to Abstudy. The increased funding totalling $16.4 million will be spread over four years.

	2000-1	2001-2	2002-3	2003-4
Additional funding for AIC & Abstudy	$2.154 m	$4.451 m	$4.751 m	$5.068 m

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The AIC scheme will increase by an additional $13.8 million over four years, while the ABSTUDY Away Rate School Fees Allowance for Boarders will increase by $2.7 million over the same period.

The following increases will take effect from 1 January 2001:

- The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance will increase from $3,539 to $3,893 a year and continue to be indexed in line with inflation
- The AIC Additional Boarding Allowance will be maintained and adjusted annually in line with inflation
- The AIC Second Home Allowance will increase from $2,500 to $3,893 a year and will be indexed annually in line with inflation
- The AIC Distance Education Allowance will increase from $1,000 to $1,052 a year for primary students and from $1,500 to $1,579 a year for secondary students and will be indexed annually in line with inflation
- The ABSTUDY Away Rate School Fees Allowance for Boarders will increase from the basic maximum rate of $3,539 to $3,893 a year and continue to be indexed in line with inflation. The additional component of this allowance will be maintained at its current level (Commonwealth Budget 2000-2001).

HREOC Recommendations

Our recommendations aim to enhance the availability and quality of regional school term hostels because they offer appropriate and affordable boarding options for rural and remote students. The relative proximity of regional hostels to the family home is highly valued by many families and students.

Recommendation 6.4a: Each education department should review the availability and quality of regional school term hostels. Where necessary and following local consultation, school term hostels should be established in conjunction with secondary schools in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation 6.4b: To ensure the acceptability of hostels to students and parents

- the Ministerial Education Advisory Council in each State and Territory should establish guidelines for the management and operation of hostels
- accredited training should be provided for hostel staff
- hostels which serve Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students should be staffed by appropriate Indigenous people

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- day-to-day management of each hostel should be overseen by a local management advisory committee constituted by staff, students and parents from the school or schools served by that hostel.

Recommendation 7.4: The AIC Basic Boarding Allowance should be equivalent to 55% of the national average boarding fee and varied annually to maintain that proportion. The adequacy of the Additional Boarding Allowance should be reviewed. It should not be allowed to fall below its current value of approximately 11% of the national average boarding fee.

Recommendation 7.5: The AIC Second Home Allowance should be increased to the equivalent of the Basic Boarding Allowance for eligible students.

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9 Information Technology

More than anybody else isolated kids are ready - because of their independence and responsibility - to take advantage of this technology and they can't (Bourke NSW public meeting)

Information technology infrastructure is essential to the provision of quality education for rural and remote school students. Telstra, the Commonwealth Government and all education providers play important roles in meeting the technology requirements of these students. Key elements of technology infrastructure include Internet access, equipment repair and technical support for schools, professional development for teachers and access to appropriately resourced libraries.

The dangers involved in the introduction of new technology centre around access to appropriate technology and infrastructure. Information technology has become an essential area of learning for all students ... some remote locations may not be adequately equipped to provide computer facilities or training. This situation is not acceptable in this day and age (Katu Kalpa 2000, paragraph 4.117).

Primary students meeting with the inquiry in Port Lincoln SA

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West Wyalong, NSW

From West Wyalong High School P&C, West Wyalong Public School P&C, Wyalong Public School P&C, West Wyalong Public School Council, Wyalong Public School Council, West Wyalong Teachers Federation Association and West Wyalong High School Student Representative Council.

Teachers who have no formal computer training and limited technical knowledge are making decisions about computers, Internet and networking. At West Wyalong High School we have a committee of eight, led by two head teachers. These people are making decisions that affect the delivery of education and technology. As we are relatively isolated (150 kilometres from the nearest comparable sized high school in our district) we often have to make decisions based on phone call advice from people who do not really know our situation.

We agreed to install an ISDN for Internet access (paid for by the Department of Education and Training) and connect eight computers in the library onto this line. Telstra installed the line and a hub arrived via courier. The rest was left to us. The librarian and her head teacher spent a day connecting computers to cables etc following advice over the phone. After several more days of the librarian trying to follow instructions over the phone and the computers being 'down', it was decided to employ 'an expert' from the private sector. The nearest person was 150 kilometres away. It took him several weeks to arrive. As we were a small customer who could wait, we were not a high priority for his company. At one stage he wanted to come in during the holidays - therefore a teacher had to be in town to open up facilities for him. He did not keep his appointment. When he did arrive he spent a day working on the computers and, soon after he left, we found that two computers still didn't work. It took another three months and two other 'experts' before the system worked.

As the number of computers in the school increased, additional demands were placed on those teachers who knew a little bit about computers. This meant that the teacher who took responsibility for the Macintosh computers had to give up two or three days of each holidays to maintain the computer lab.

Teething problems created high levels of frustration amongst staff and students. They could see the computers in the rooms, however because of a lack of technical knowledge, teaching staff could not connect the equipment to the Internet. Today, twelve months on, the frustration is that we need more labs of computers connected to the Internet. We are

planning on bringing another twelve labs 'on line'. What would be a simple up-grade for IT experts (accessible for city schools via the private sector) means two or three teaching staff researching and using valuable lesson preparation time making phone calls etc.

A decision was made to employ a local who has computer knowledge - his job description was to make recommendations, maintain equipment and troubleshoot. Unfortunately he is the only person in our area with any expertise - therefore several schools and businesses use his services and this can result in computers being 'down' for several days until he can attend to the problem. This is a preferred situation to having teaching staff giving up weekends, holidays and preparation periods to rectify problems.

When a computer does need to be sent away for repairs it can take an inordinate amount of time. Recently a computer 'crashed'. Our local expert looked at it the next day and decided to send it to be repaired. The business that has the contract with the Department of Education is 150 kilometres away. They agreed to organise a courier to collect the computer. It took seven days for the computer to be picked up from the school. It has now been five days after the machine was collected and we still have not heard from the company. If we lived nearer the business the computer would have been taken to them and less time would have been lost.

An obvious problem with computers and the Internet being down is that teachers have activities and lessons prepared on the assumption that the technology is available. Staff will often enter a computer lab, give instructions to students and set them to work, only to find that the Internet is not operating or some of the machines have 'crashed'. This means that alternate activities or whole lessons have to be taught at very short notice. This can affect continuity to a teaching program. A unit of historical research, on the Internet, is hardly effective when the Internet cannot be accessed.

District Office provides a Technology Consultant based in Griffith. The two men who have filled this position over the last four years have been very helpful. However, there are problems. They are often 'on the road' - they have to drive large distances to cover all the schools in the district - West Wyalong High is one of the outlying schools. This travel time is valuable time lost in assisting schools.

Training in IT skills, for teachers, are limited. The Department of Education and Training offers few courses. For us a 9.00am to 4.00pm training day at District Office involves a two hour drive each way and the employment of a casual

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teacher at a rate of approximately $200 per day. We have a very limited number of casual teachers for work. More and more the private sector is offering IT courses for teachers. These often occur in Sydney. This is a five hour car trip or a $400 return flight. Quite often the hours of the courses would involve overnight accommodation and meals even if the teacher flew to Sydney. This makes these courses totally unviable.

As our ISDN was supplied by the Department of Education and Training, we obviously operate through the Department's server for the Internet. Whilst this is a massive cost saving for the school we find that during crucial times of the day the system often slows up - occasionally stopping completely. This system has improved over the last few months. However, it is incredibly frustrating for students and staff to have Internet research and the Internet operating at snail's pace.

To give our students an opportunity to compete against their city counterparts we use the Internet to provide information and experiences. When the Internet is 'down' - this is not possible. City students have access to large libraries, universities and museums to access information. With the advent of the Internet rural students were given equal opportunities - the Australian War Memorial website is a perfect example. Poor Internet speeds, particularly when students are researching from home, often makes this work time consuming and expensive. Local line speeds vary from 33,000 to 56,000 - my average home connection speed is 44,700 despite our equipment and provider offering 56,000. The low speeds are the result of poor quality phone lines and climatic conditions. Two of our feeder schools have been told by Telstra that it is impossible to install ISDN (high speed lines) in their area. These schools have to rely on local service providers and slow phone lines. This is frustrating for staff and students and wastes valuable class time accessing information via the Net.

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Other IT Issues

Internet access

As we move further into the information age, education access is increasingly dependent upon access to the Internet and related technologies. For many rural and remote school students, education is impeded by difficulties in accessing the Internet. While Internet users in Sydney can have unlimited access for as little as $7 a week, in many rural areas the cost is $7 an hour. Other problems include unreliability of access and unacceptably low transmission speeds.

Currently, Australian rural and remote areas are characterised by limited access to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), higher telephone costs and very slow Internet access speed if available at all (Priority Country Area Program Qld State Council submission).

At present Telstra's universal service agreement is aimed at providing minimum line speeds of 2.4Kbps (which, of course, is too slow to access the World Wide Web satisfactorily), but Telstra officials privately concede that 1Kb per second is more likely, and even that low, slow speed will be subject to performance degradations resulting from line distances and sources of interference such as electric fences (Devlin 1999).

The school has internet connection through the Connect Ed program. The cost is cheap - only $60 per month. However, access is not reliable. You can never come into school in the morning assuming that it will be working (Doomadgee School Qld submission).

Our nearest centre is Rockhampton and to phone is an STD call. This makes Internet time costly. It also takes a long time for us to download due to our phone exchange being outdated (Marlborough State School P&C Association Qld submission).

Our school has major problems with the technology our students must use for Open Access and Local Delivery subjects. Poor communication links often cause lessons to be missed or interrupted. Telstra assure us that it is not their lines causing the problems (Kimba Area School Council SA submission).

Internet access is especially difficult for students in remote areas. In some of the more isolated locations, students have no access at all. This is despite some recent positive initiatives by Telstra to increase the availability and affordability of ISDN satellite services in remote areas.

Basic problems exist with the availability of telecommunications in more remote locations in terms of cost and availability. For example, as the NT government believes 'the basic services that are available in many [remote] areas of the NT have insufficient

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capability or capacity to attach any computing network device, consequently can provide audible service only'. This limits the opportunities and access for children in remote communities in the NT and other States with large remote communities to be able to gain the same levels of skills as their urban counterparts (ATSIC submission)

Within the state education system of Queensland there has been significant improvement in the provision of Internet services to the rural school site through the Connect Ed initiative. Alas, no program has attempted to address the accessibility of technology for remotely isolated students (Priority Country Area Program Qld State Council submission).

Problems of Internet access - like many other education access issues - tend to impact disproportionately on Indigenous students, many of whom reside in remote communities.

Equipment costs

Rapid technological developments have placed increasing demands for funding of information technology resources in schools. All States and Territories have established long term plans for the development of information and communications technology in government schools. They include goals for achieving a required ratio of computers per student or school within a set period. However, strategies and resources vary significantly between jurisdictions. For details about IT programs, policy approaches and budget allocations refer to the State and Territory reports to Education Network Australia (EdNA), in particular *School Education Information Technology Initiatives, 2000* (EdNA 2000).

These reports and other available data reveal that Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales stand out as the leaders in terms of their respective budget commitments. Queensland's Education Department has established 'Schooling 2001', a three year (1997-2000) $80 million initiative for IT in schools, with $23.5 million allocated in 1999-2000. It includes a network of technicians to provide technical support in all 36 school districts.

The South Australian Government has allocated $85.6 million over five years (1997-2001) to support schools in the use of technology including the establishment of three 'Global Discovery Schools' in rural communities.

The Western Australian Education Department's 'Education 2000 Strategy' includes an allocation of $90.96 million over five years (1997-2002) for a 'Computers for Schools' program and the installation of digital satellite receiving equipment in all country schools.

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The New South Wales Government introduced the 'Computers in Schools Program' in 1995. Expenditure on the program in its first four years was $170.6 million. $92.8 million was budgeted for the program in 1999-2000. The initial four year program included distribution of 40,000 leased computers to schools, training of 15,000 teachers in use of technology in the classroom and appointment of 40 technology advisers to District Offices (NSW Audit Office 2000).

South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria have all set computer to student targets of 1:5 by specified dates. New South Wales aims for a ratio of 1:8.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, many submissions from schools described their difficulties meeting the high cost of computers and related technologies.

Access to effective technology hardware at a reasonable cost is unavailable (Moura State High School P&C Association Qld submission).

The policy of the state government in partially providing computer technology has been a drain on our limited resources. The funding of software, site licences, ancillary hardware and networking has been quite demanding. Yet, because the community now expects pupils to be computer literate, our small school must be seen to be keeping pace with advancements in the electronic media (Scotts Head Public School P&C Committee NSW submission).

Inequity between schools has also been identified as a significant problem.

There was substantial variation in the level of computer hardware, software, technical support and local area networking in the schools visited ... For example ... the computer to student ration ranged from 1:12 to 1:6 (NSW Audit Office 2000).

Significant funding is required not just for the initial capital investment in technology resources but also for their continuing development, maintenance and upgrade.

Capital and financial assistance should be given to enable modern communication equipment, including computers, fax and dedicated telephone lines for this to be available for children in rural and remote areas. Ongoing financial help also should be considered, to keep the equipment up to date with modern technology (Grahame and Lynda Code, Aberfeldy Vic, submission).

Local sponsorship and community partnerships can play an important role in meeting students' technology requirements. However, they are not a substitute for core government funding.

Frequently issues surrounding technology are, initially at least, tied up

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with funding. While the DET provides some resources funding, and hardware such as the computer rollout, there is a shortfall. The assumption among politicians and policy makers appears to be that school communities are able to enter arrangements with local businesses to provide sponsorship for the school. This is a false assumption in communities such as Dorrigo, where local businesses are small in scope and often struggling to survive themselves (Dorrigo High School NSW submission).

Some independent schools in country areas face particularly severe limitations in access to funding for information technology programs.

[C]ountry non-government schools such as ours are also endeavouring to keep up with the developments in technology. However, in most cases we are doing it alone and on very tight budgets ... [U]nfortunately, we do not have a big organisation such as a Government body that can inject considerable funds into this particular area over a short period as is the case in the Government schools. Our development in this area will thus be a far longer process and, therefore, in some ways places our students at a disadvantage compared to our Government school colleagues. This disadvantage, of course, would be far more pronounced in the more remote areas of the State (St Mary's College Gunnedah NSW submission).

Maintenance, repair and technical support

Technology infrastructure is more than just software, hardware and telephone lines. It also requires people with the skills and expertise to support and maintain these systems.

Technical support services are a major challenge for rural and remote schools (Ardlethan Central School Council NSW submission).

Rural and remote schools do not always have access to people and businesses in their local community with the skills to undertake maintenance and repair of information technology systems. Often the choice is between sending equipment away for repair or waiting for technical service providers to visit the community. The distance factor can make timely access to maintenance and repair services highly problematic.

There is generally a lack of technical support among our school personnel and indeed in our community, especially for the installation and repair of hardware, software and computer networks. (Moura State High School P&C Association Qld submission).

Rural and remote schools do not have such access and either have to send equipment to larger centres or Sydney for

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servicing or repair. The infinite variations in equipment specialisation cannot be managed by teachers in schools using the fractional technical support allocation (Ardlethan Central School Council NSW submission)

Technical services to support schools e.g. electrical repairs, computers, can be hard to access. If equipment needs to be sent to Perth for repairs it can be away for the best part of a school term - no replacement is available for students to use in the meantime. Damage to equipment during the return journey can extend the problem. (Eastern Goldfields Senior High School P&C Association WA submission)

The distance factor not only leads to delays but inevitably translates into higher costs for maintenance and repair

Major problems are incurred due to ... lack of technical expertise and support resulting in excessive costs to overcome faults. For example, our telephone system is supported by a business in Newcastle (2 hours drive). The cost of repairing a fault incurs a travel cost of $300 each time a technician has to visit the school (Aberdeen Public School NSW submission)

Expense of transporting essential new equipment rapidly eats into budgets with no educational gain. Transportation to and from Perth for repairs adds further to costs. Most resources have to be purchased sight unseen from catalogues, as showroom inspection is difficult (Eastern Goldfields Senior High School P&C Association WA submission)

Urban based companies are reluctant to quote on installation and support of computer networks due to them incurring costs in supporting such networks (Aberdeen Public School NSW submission)

Many schools told the inquiry about the frustration they experienced trying to deal with the delay and down time resulting from equipment breakdown

Nothing is more frustrating than having equipment breakdown etc and not being able to get it fixed in an acceptable amount of time or without exorbitant cost. The access programme relies on technology, however, the company from Sydney that installed it has no agent in our area. Consequently when you phone them they give you instructions over the phone and if not successful, we send it to Sydney. Unfortunately when it comes back with a clean bill of health the problems may reoccur. New technology does not always behave when introduced to an older Telstra network.

We are as I write this having such a problem with our conferencing equipment. It has been 3 weeks and the problem is yet to be solved. I have frustrated staff and students because communication with the other schools is between unreliable and non-existent depending on the day.

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Whenever the system goes down it takes a long time to fix it. Recently the system went down when lightning struck. We didn't have access for 4 weeks because that's how long it took someone to come out and fix it (Doomadgee S. hool Qld submission)

Typically, responsibility for attending to computer malfunction and other technology breakdown falls by default to teachers with limited expertise in the area. They do this with little or no recognition and sometimes to the detriment of their teaching duties.

We ... have had some reliability problems with software and things like that. It is getting better but it takes an inordinate amount of time to rectify. We have had to build in an allowance of non-teaching [for one staff member] for him to maintain the system (Bourke NSW public meeting)

The whole technology dilemma is heightened by the nature of the Head Teacher's or the teaching Principal's workload. We appear to be the 'Jack of all trades, but master of none'. Unfortunately the role is very demanding and it is difficult to address the current requirements of technology, without some extra technical assistance, professional development and budget support ... We need real technical support, not just the kit sent in the mail.

For a person in my position, I just dread a 'computer mishap', because I don't have the technical expertise to know how to fix it. Yes I can get on the phone to someone who will help, but in some instances the problem is far greater and needs the services of a proper technician. More often than not, I just can't afford the time wasted floundering around and getting nowhere. Then again do you realise that a technician will charge an arm and a leg just to travel to Tubbul before even looking at the problem? Our technology support has to be accessed in the most unconventional ways, any port in a storm, even our roving Uniting Church minister has been known to turn his divine hand to technology. Luckily he was with me when my Acer [computer] had a seizure and had to be completely resurrected from the dead (Tubbul Primary School Vic submission).

The other big issue is technical support. We have a consultant from Broome though he has responsibilities all over the Kimberley. We haven't seen him yet this year though we hope to see him some time this term. When something goes wrong we fix it if we can though this is very time-consuming (Billiluna WA school meeting).

The situation of rural and remote schools contrasts with metropolitan schools that generally have a wide choice of technical support networks within easy reach.

Technology is a focus for our school but we are extremely disadvantaged. Even

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though we receive adequate funding there just does not exist the support service needed. An example, we are setting up a school computer network so that we might be able to provide Internet facilities into classrooms. Existing staff members have limited expertise. Contractors/computer providers can install the system but to maintain the system we will be floundering. We learn as we go. Metropolitan schools have a number of support people they can use (Ed dept and private companies), all of whom are keen to offer competitive quotes for such service (Broome Primary School WA submission).

Many submissions to the inquiry favoured the provision of more systematic technical support for rural and remote schools, either through funded in-house positions or arrangements involving regular visits by qualified technicians.

Above all, the level of technology support promised in schools just has not happened yet. Without support in the form of a visiting technician, we are going to be rapidly left behind. For a technician to travel to Tubbut, the cost is prohibitive. With a budget as small as ours, we are finding it hard to afford the current levels of technology. Larger schools have ready access to both funds and to the services of a technician. I will have to pay for the expertise of a technician to come and sort out my year 2000 compliance problems. In travelling costs alone, my school will be up for nearly $700, not to mention accommodation, meals and any work that has to be done.

A very real need for small schools in the East is for a support technician, on contract to the D.O.E. [Department of Education], to visit on a regular basis to assist with problems and hassles. A person like this could also talk about and demonstrate what's new in the technology field as well as advise on suitable purchases... A degree of support ... funded by the D.O.E. would enable Tubbut Primary School and other small schools to keep heads above water and maybe start swimming in this sea of technology (Tubbut Primary School Vic submission).

The failure of the government to fulfil its promise to provide a full-time technical support person in all central and secondary schools is a major blow to central schools such as Ardlethan. Schools in large towns and cities can quickly access the technical support in the numerous computer firms that now exist. Support that is ineffective or suspect can lead to enormous waste of staff time and energy (Ardlethan Central School Council NSW submission).

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Professional development for teachers

In addition to technical support, rural and remote teachers require professional development programs to ensure that they have the necessary expertise in information technology as it pertains to the school curriculum and their teaching responsibilities. Rapid developments in technology are such that teachers need access to these programs on a regular basis. Most of the information technology plans administered by State and Territory education departments include professional development programs for teachers. The same applies to Catholic Education Offices. However, submissions from rural and remote schools suggest that greater priority needs to be given to this area.

The introduction of IT in schools has been characterised by inadequate levels of training and professional development, technical support and occupational health and safety information. There has been competition for scarce resources in schools and a haphazard approach to whole school IT development (Qld Independent Education Union submission).

Training teachers to become expert in this area is based on personal time and expense travelling to Adelaide. The funding is not available to incorporate those who are experts in the community (Booleroo Centre High School SA submission).

In a small, isolated school where the staff has to take on many roles in addition to keeping up with curricula revision and developments in technology, the ongoing professional development of staff is essential. Yet government funding for this has progressively been cut with each teacher now receiving approximately $75 per annum, hardly enough to cover transport to inservice venues (Scotts Head Public School P&C Committee NSW submission).

The more isolated the community, the more important technology becomes as a means of accessing information and services. Within the school context, we perceive the need to provide a wide range of opportunities to access technology. Some of the issues are: ... Training and development for teachers in the application of various technologies into their teaching ... Breaking down the fear barrier among the community in general, and teachers and students in particular, about using modern technologies in learning (Dorrigo High School NSW submission).

Information technology is itself a valuable tool for delivering professional development programs and school curriculum generally. Programs delivered through videoconferencing and other interactive technologies may overcome some of the cost and other logistical factors that make it difficult for rural and remote teachers to travel long distances to undertake training.

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Videoconferencing for staff training and development has huge potential, but little has been done to broaden the concept in country areas. We believe this is due to the lack of technological infrastructure and political will to hasten the process (Booleroo Centre High School SA submission).

Library facilities

In some rural and remote communities, students are disadvantaged by lack of access to public libraries and inadequate information technology facilities within existing libraries. The inquiry noted that in South Australia there are many examples of public libraries co-located with schools and sharing computer and Internet facilities. For some communities this may be a more efficient way of servicing both the school and the local community.

[R]egional and rural library users remain deprived of the range of library access points, resources, staffing, services, technology and Internet connectivity common in urban areas. The three most critical deficiencies are lack of access points, far too few professional and paraprofessional staff, and slow progress in Internet provision and training for the community. In particular, there has been a failure in most parts of rural Australia to examine the merits of school housed public libraries for smaller communities (Bundy 1998).

No after school access to school libraries is possible due to shortage of library staff to run the facility for longer hours. Town library has a small range of books suitable to high school students and some access to computers and Internet (Eastern Goldfields Senior High School WA submission).

HREOC Recommendations

Information technologies have the capacity to bridge the barriers of distance. Our recommendations aim to enhance access and equity for rural and remote students. Rural and remote Australians should be guaranteed an adequate level of affordable ISDN and satellite services.

Recommendation 6.5: The Commonwealth should extend the Universal Service Obligation (USO) so that it covers Internet and the full range of telecommunications services necessary to meet the educational needs of rural and remote school students. The Customer Service Guarantee should be amended as necessary to reflect the revised USO. The USO should be extended to cover not only Telstra but any other carrier that may acquire rural services under revised arrangements.

Recommendation 6.7: Each education provider should review the availability and quality of videoconferencing and

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other interactive technologies for rural and remote students and staff with a view to providing additional funding and other support for curriculum and professional development initiatives which build in these technologies.

Recommendation 6.8a: The Commonwealth should commission the Australian Local Government Association to undertake a national review of public library needs in rural and remote communities with particular reference to their IT requirements and the potential for, and the advantages of, housing public libraries in local schools as joint-use community libraries.

Recommendation 6.8b: State and Territory local government departments should provide additional funding for initiatives to support the IT requirements of public libraries in rural and remote communities and/or for the establishment of school-based joint-use libraries in rural and remote communities.

Recommendation 6.9: All education providers should fund specialist IT support officers based in regional education offices to service rural and remote schools to provide IT support including repairs and maintenance, advice and training.

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10 Access to Secondary Schools

In this section we focus on local provision of secondary schools. The inquiry found that, for the most part and in particular with the significant exceptions noted in this report, primary education is accessible to most rural and remote students in Australia. The same cannot be said of secondary schools.

Each map distinguishes between junior and senior secondary schools. The WA and NT maps also mark Community Schools that enrol secondary-age students but do not offer a secondary curriculum. Only rural and remote schools are indicated.

It is interesting to compare the distribution of secondary schools with the distribution of secondary-age students. The maps provide a general distribution in Statistical Divisions (Statistical Local Areas in the NT). For precise 12-18 year old population figures in each SD or SLA refer to the table on the full map of Australia facing.

Definitions

Senior Secondary Schools are those which provide a Year 12 curriculum including senior colleges delivering Years 11 and 12 only (as in Tasmania), secondary schools delivering Years 7 or 8 to 12 and schools that combine primary and secondary and deliver to Year 12.

Junior Secondary Schools provide mainstream curriculum options in at least the first year of secondary school. Most provide mainstream programs up to and including Year 10.

Community Schools enrol secondary-age students but do not provide mainstream secondary curriculum programs. In the NT they are known as Community Education Centres and may enrol adults as well as children and young people. Some of them provide Vocational Education and Training, primary education and/or modified secondary education programs.

Note that where two or more schools in the same category are co-located, only one icon is shown. For example, in some towns there is a government high school and a Catholic high school, both enrolling students to Year 12. In that case, only one icon is shown.

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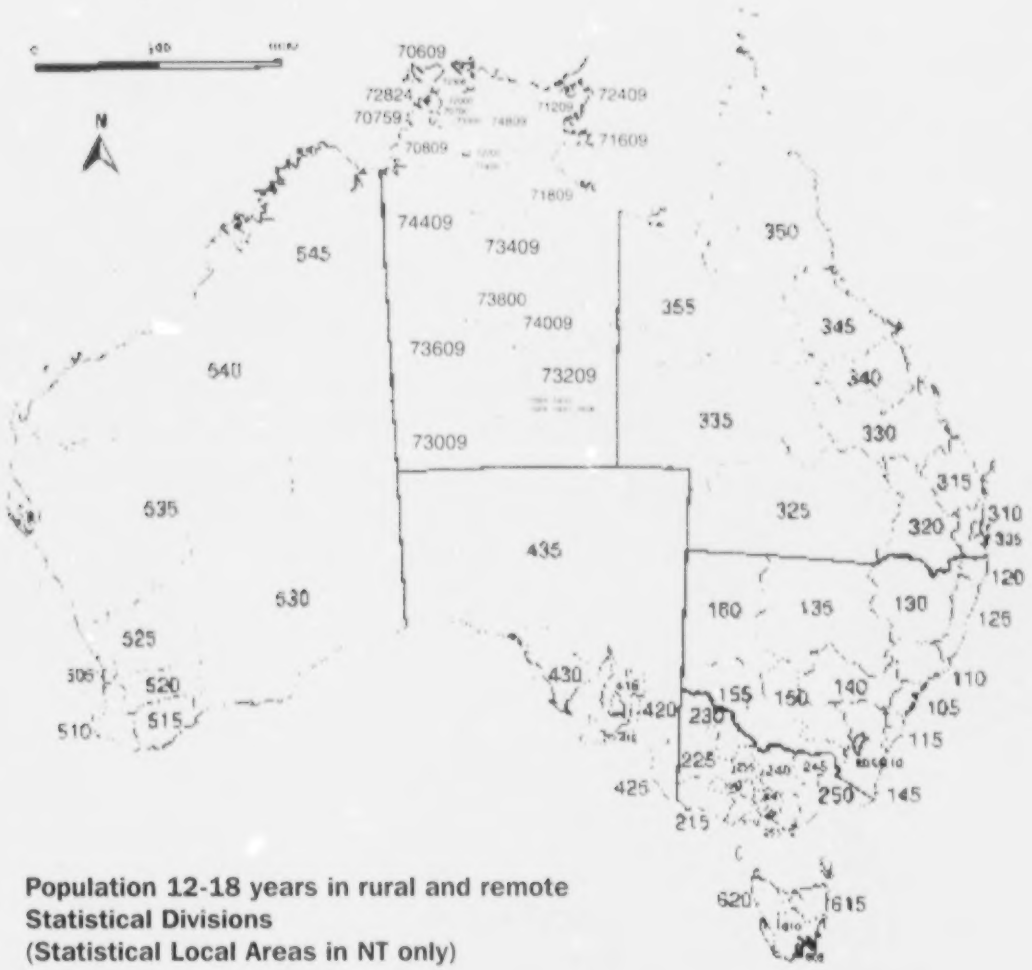

Population 12-18 years in rural and remote Statistical Divisions (Statistical Local Areas in NT only)

New South Wales		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
105	Sydney	
110	Hunter	24,230*
115	Illawarra	18,992*
120	Richmond-Tweed	20,541
125	Mid-North Coast	26,491
130	Northern (NSW)	18,931
135	North Western	11,225
140	Central West (NSW)	18,761
145	South Eastern (NSW)	18475
150	Murrumbidgee	15,898
155	Murray	11,361
160	Far West	2,241

Victoria		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
205	Melbourne	
210	Barwon	5,695*
215	Western District	10,180
220	Central Highlands	14,380
225	Wimmera	4,850
230	Mallee	8,939
235	Loddon	16,624
240	Goulburn	19,490
245	Ovens-Murray	10,233
250	East Gippsland	8,712
255	Gippsland	15,790

Queensland		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
305	Brisbane	
310	Moreton	1,175
315	Wide Bay-Burnett	23,122
320	Darling Downs	22,519
325	South West (QLD)	2,225
330	Fitzroy	19,881
335	Central West (QLD)	1,049
340	Mackay	12,492
345	Northern (QLD)	20,918
350	Far North	9,653
355	North West	3,319

South Australia		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
405	Adelaide	
410	Outer Adelaide	9,877
415	Yorke and Lower North	3,739
420	Murray Lands	6,240
425	South East	6,176
430	Eyre	3,214
435	Northern (SA)	1,813

Western Australia		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
505	Perth	
510	South West (WA)	17,390
515	Lower Great Southern	5,038
520	Upper Great Southern	1,954
525	Midlands	4,416
530	South Eastern (WA)	5,011
535	Central	5,947
540	Pilbara	3,736
545	Kimberley	2,713

Tasmania		
Statistical Divisions		12-18 years
605	Greater Hobart	
610	Southern	3,254
615	Northern (TAS)	13,560
620	Mersey-Lyell	11,454

Northern Territory		
Statistical Local Areas		12-18 years
70208/70207/70201/70203		
70205	Alice Springs	2,704
73609	Tanami	832
73009	Petermann	337
73209	Sandover (Bal)	284
73800	Tennant Creek	373
74009	Tennant Creek (Bal)	259
73409	Tableland	138
74409	Victoria	358
71809	Gulf	341
71409	Esey (Bal)	222
72200	Katherine	955
70809	Daly	465
74809	West Arnhem	456
71209	East Arnhem (Bal)	922
71609	Groote Eylandt	243
72000	Jabiru	86
73309	South Alligator	64
70700	Coomalie	118
70759	Cox Finniss	68
72308	Litchfield	1,309
70609	Bathurst-Melville	308
72824	Palmerston	1,323
72409	Nhulunbuy	355

Australian Capital Territory	
805	Canberra
810	ACT-Balance

Note: *12-18 update after adjusting for large LGAs

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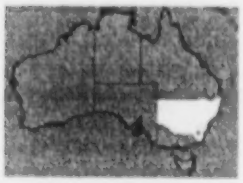
New South Wales



Geography: 800,640 square kilometres. 10.4% of Australia
Population: 6,274,000 (1997). 34% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students total 264,737 (1998) 24% of NSW students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 75% of all NSW primary schools, Catholic schools are 19%, other non-government schools are 5%. Total primary schools: 2,420 including 233 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 59% of all NSW secondary schools, Catholic schools are 21%, other independent schools are 20%. Total secondary schools: 771 including 233 combined primary & secondary.

* Excludes Special Schools.

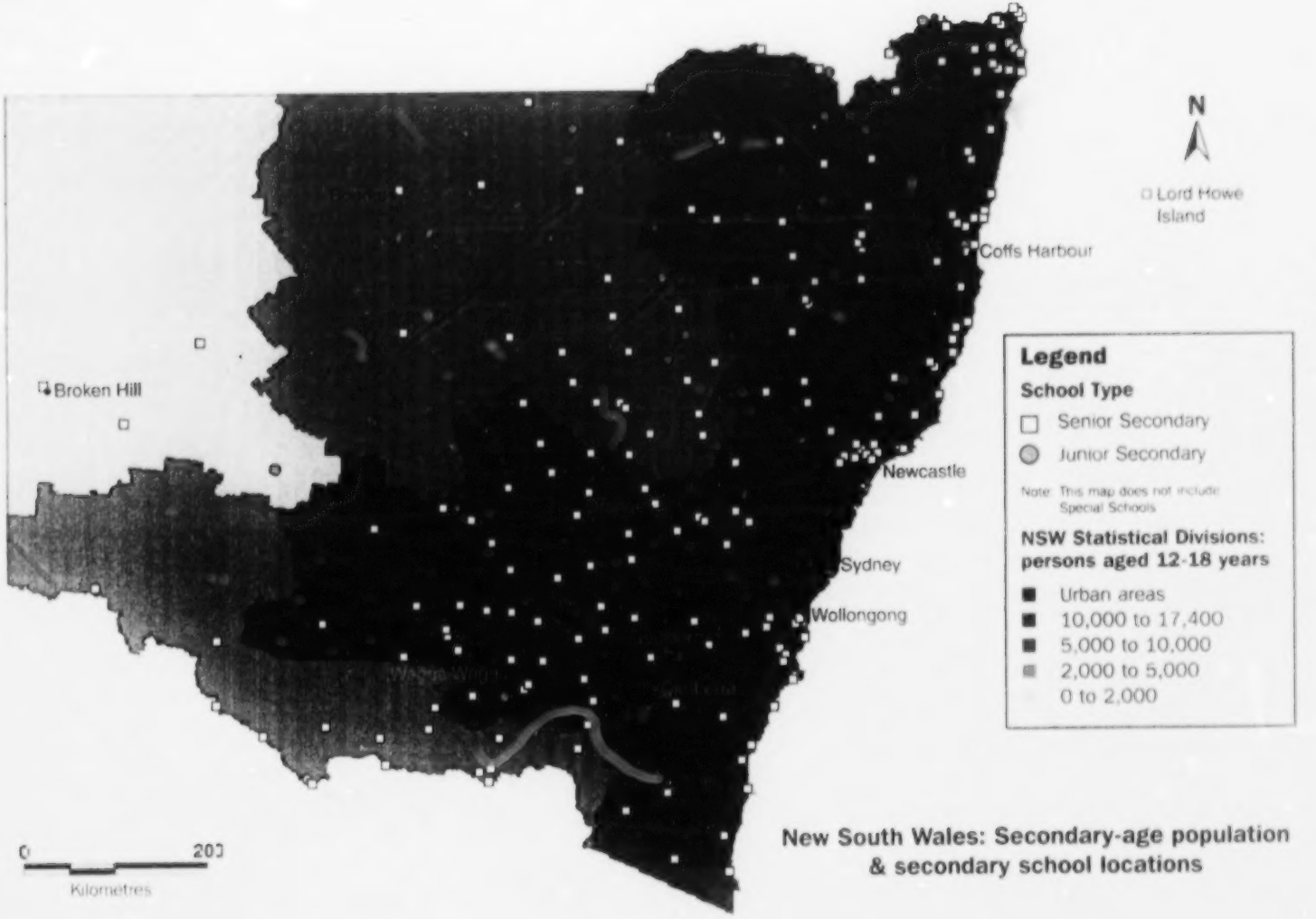
Distance education centres: 19 with 6,500 students.

Rural & remote schools		% of total in State
Government	1,057	50%
Non-government	740	87%
Special Schools	18	15%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all NSW schools - 1997-98: $5,193

Department of Education and Training priorities
- Improving literacy and numeracy skills.
- Expanding new technologies in learning.
- Increasing options for VET in schools.
- Physical fitness and performing arts.
- Quality teaching.
- Parent and community involvement in schools.

Catholic Education priorities - Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
- Cross-sectoral cooperation between Catholic and government schools.
- Refocussing CAP funding.
- Staffing and staff conditions in rural and remote schools.
- Telecommunications.
- Programs for rural boys.



New South Wales: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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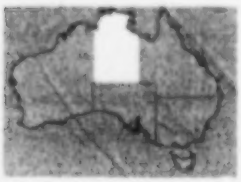
Northern Territory



Geography: 1,349,130 square kilometres. 17.5% of Australia
Population: 187,000 (1997): 1% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students[@] total 20,744 (1999): 55% of NT students, 16,991 (82%) attend government schools, 3,753 (18%) attend non-government schools.

@ Excludes students from the Darwin metropolitan area

Primary schools*: Government schools are 85% of all NT primary schools; Catholic schools are 8%; other independent schools are 7%. Total primary schools: 157 including 47 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 77% of all NT secondary schools; Catholic schools are 12%, other non-government schools are 11%. Total secondary schools: 64 including 47 combined primary & secondary.

* Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres/campuses: 6 with 528 full-time students and 50 pre-school students.

Rural & remote schools (other than Darwin)		% of total in NT
Government	116	82%
Non-government	17	81%
Community Education Centres	19	100%
Out-stations/homeland communities visited by teacher from hub school	55	

Total Commonwealth & Territory government expenditure per student in all NT schools - 1997-98: $8,779

Department of Education priorities

- Developing an Indigenous Education Branch.
- Developing remote multi-purpose early childhood services.
- Establishing cross-sectoral partnerships.
- Piloting 'Self Managing Schools'.
- Linking schools and community libraries.
- Staff recruitment, retention and professional development including increasing the number of ESL recruits.

Catholic Education priorities

- Developing mainstream secondary education in Tiwi schools.
- Improving attendance, retention, literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students.
- Consolidating secondary boarding opportunities for students from remote communities.
- Establishing links with community leaders to improve educational outcomes and work towards localisation.
- Mentor programs for Indigenous education leaders.

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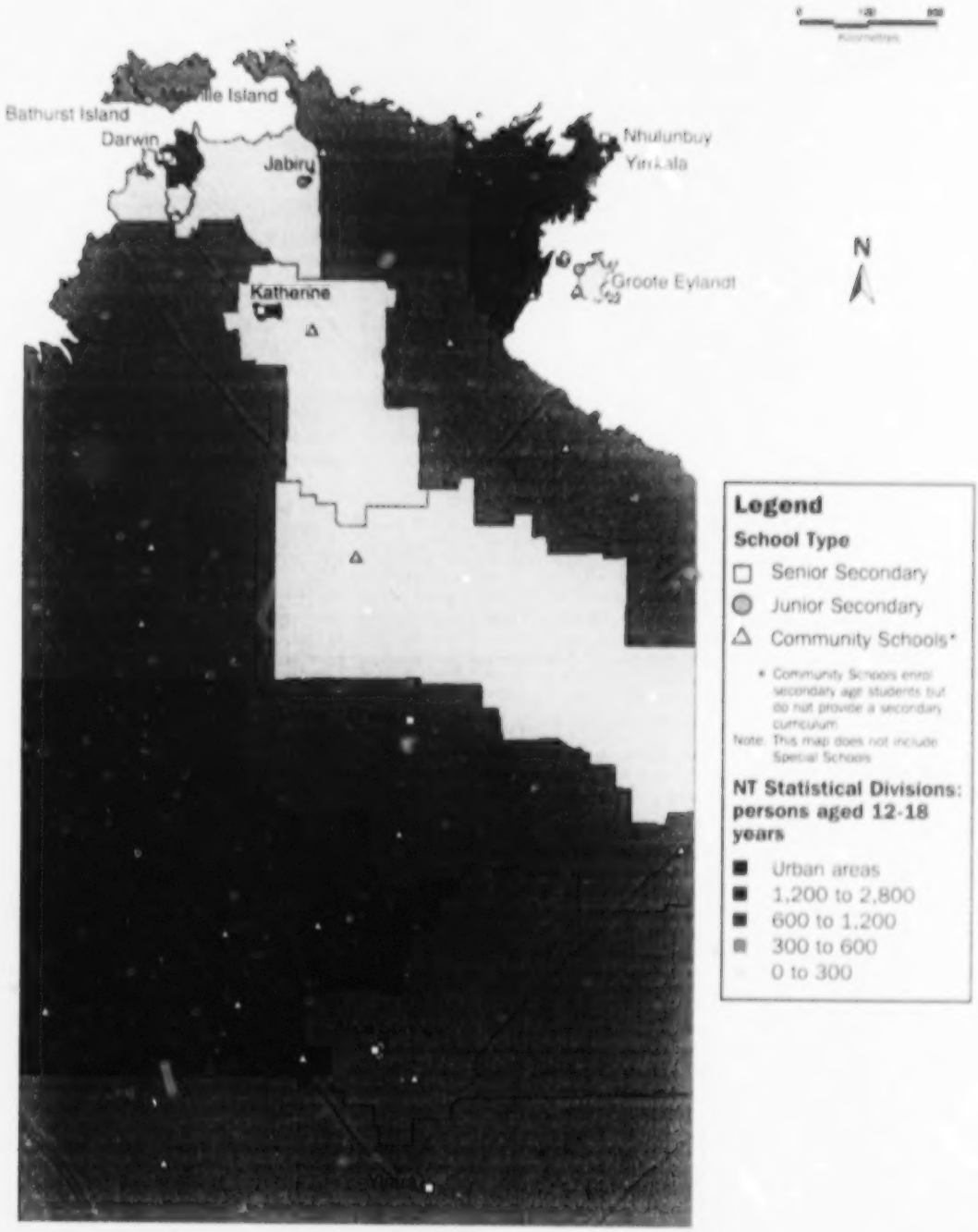

Northern Territory: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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Queensland

Geography: 1,730,650 square kilometres: 22.5 % of Australia
Population: 3,401,000: 18% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote government school students[a]: total 133,195 (2000): 29% of all Queensland government students

[a] Data unavailable on non-government students

Primary schools*: Government schools are 76% of all Queensland primary schools; Catholic schools are 15%, other non-government schools are 10%. Total primary schools: 1,410 including 174 combined primary & secondary

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 60% of all Queensland secondary schools; Catholic schools are 18%; other non-government schools are 22%. Total secondary schools: 437 including 174 combined primary & secondary

* Excludes special schools

Distance education centres: 7 with 6,000 students

Rural & remote schools		% of total in State
Government	1,132	90%
Non-government	240	58%
Special Schools	22	42%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all Qld schools - 1997-98: $5,513

Education Queensland priorities

- Ensuring literacy and numeracy standards in the early years of schooling.
- Providing schools with modern information technology systems.
- Exploring virtual classroom options.
- Improving and expanding VET in schools.
- Developing professional development for teachers.
- Planning for the needs of disadvantaged students.

Catholic Education priorities

- Preparation, recruitment and retention of quality staff for rural schools.
- Ensuring the educational program takes account of the rural background or experience of students and extends their horizons and visions beyond this.
- The needs of rural children requiring distance education.
- Provision of quality residential education appropriate to the needs of rural children.
- Support for the application of technological developments to further the provision of educational services in rural areas.
- Research and development of appropriate ways of providing education for rural children.

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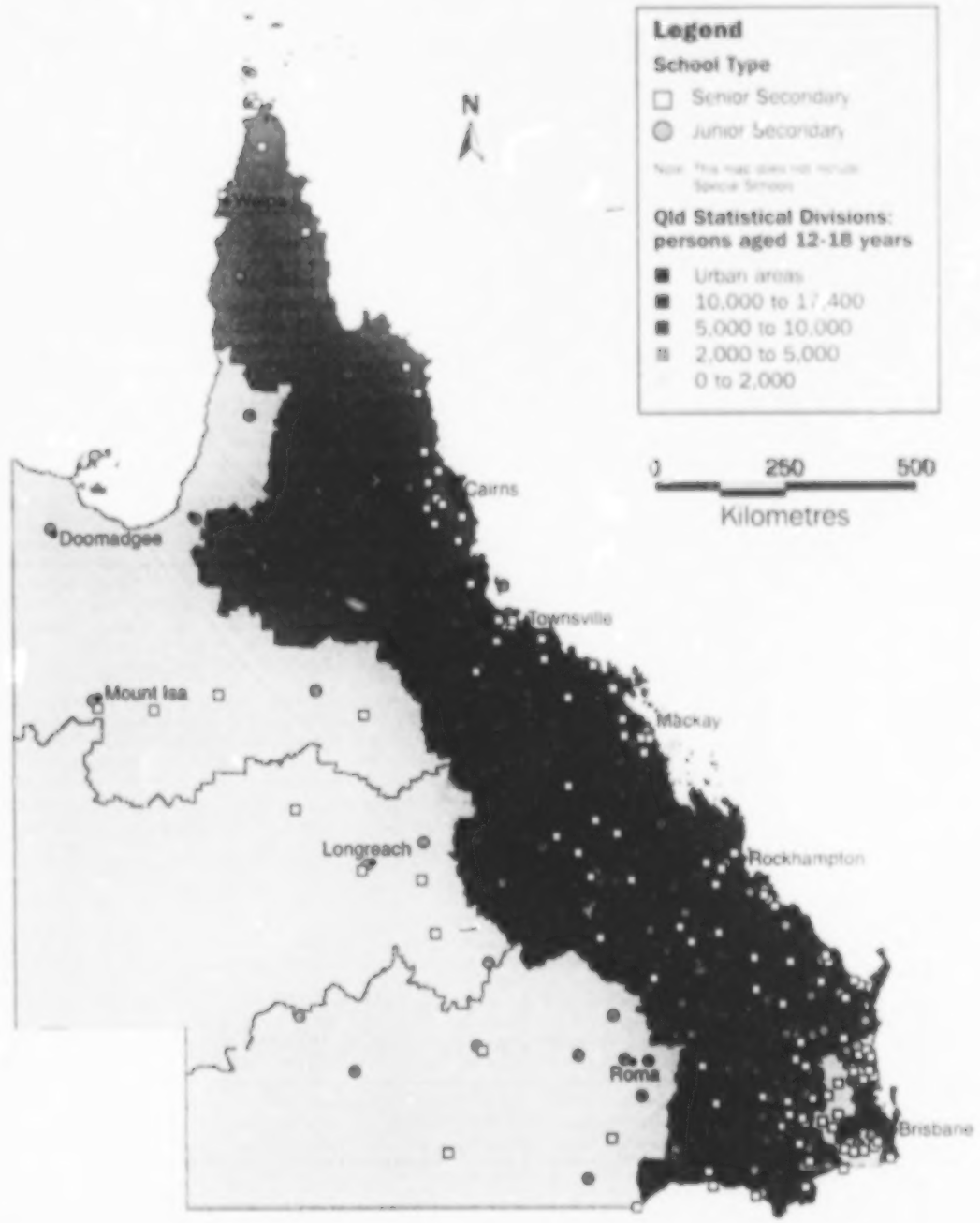

Queensland: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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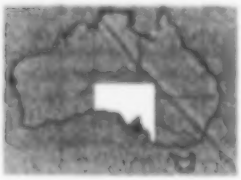
South Australia



Geography: 983,480 square kilometres. 13% of Australia
Population: 1,480,000: 8% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students total 58,871 (1999): 24% of all South Australian students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 76% of all SA primary schools. Catholic schools are 13%, other non-government schools are 11%. Total primary schools: 701 including 117 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 66% of all SA secondary schools. Catholic schools are 14%, other non-government schools are 20%. Total secondary schools: 219 including 117 combined primary & secondary.

*Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres: 2 with 884 full-time students, 491 of whom are full-time country students.

Rural & remote schools		% of total in State
Government	296	48.5%
Non-government	64	33.2%
Anangu schools	7	100%
Special Schools	10	41.7%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all SA schools - 1997-98: $5,363

Department of Education, Training and Employment priorities

- The establishment and maintenance of a Country Service Directorate with direct responsibility for resourcing and supporting country schools and children's services.
- Implementing Partnerships 21 which includes:

1. decentralising decision making at the local school level.
2. assessing the resource implications for country schools and recommending action.
3. investigating local collaborative strategies to improve employment, education, training and children's services in rural and remote areas.

Catholic Education priorities

- Supporting and providing boarding places and facilities.
- The use of electronic technology to provide access to a range of specialist subject offerings.
- The provision of student welfare and counselling programs.
- The maintenance of local schools when viability is threatened.
- Ensuring that staff provide curriculum balance and flexibility.
- Creative approaches to recruitment and staffing.
- The implementation of programs which foster parent involvement and participation in school communities.

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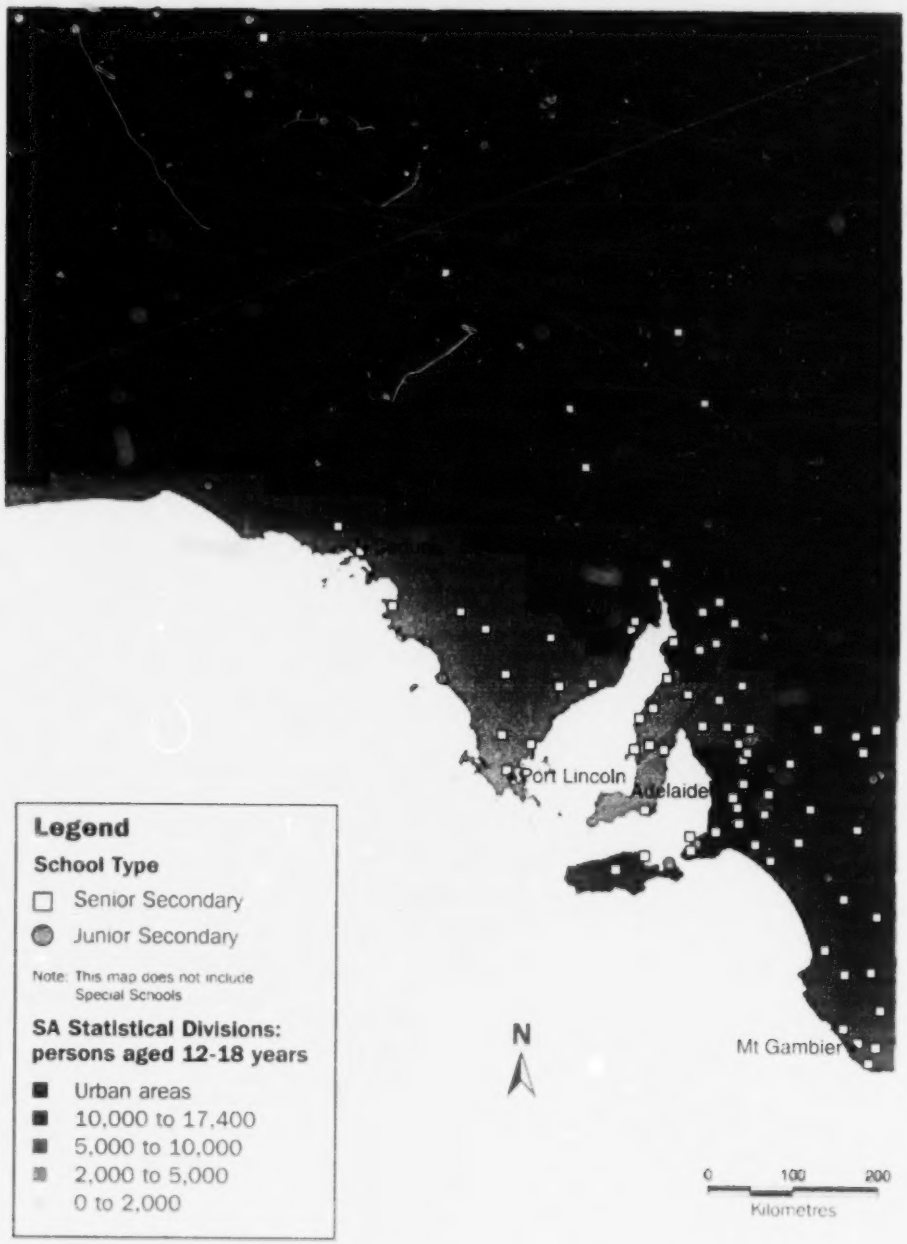

South Australia: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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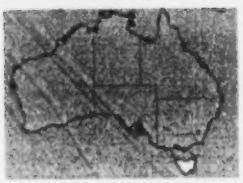
Tasmania



Geography: 68,400 square kilometres: 0.9% of Australia
Population: 474,000: 3% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote* students total 44,047 (1999) 52% of all Tasmanian students

Primary schools*: Government schools are 74% of all Tasmanian primary schools; Catholic schools are 14%; other non-government schools are 12%. Total primary schools: 228 including 52 combined primary & secondary

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 68% of all Tasmanian secondary schools; Catholic schools are 12%; other non-government schools are 20%. Total secondary schools: 99 including 52 combined primary & secondary

* Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres: 1 with 331 full-time students, 51 of whom are enrolled due to isolation. In addition 1,279 Year 11 and 12 students are enrolled part-time

Rural & remote schools@		% of total in State
Government	134	64%
Non-government	33	51%
Special Schools	9	82%

@ All areas with the exception of Greater Hobart

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all Tasmanian schools - 1997-98: $5,518

Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development priorities
- Providing information technology infrastructure to all schools over the period 1998-2001.
- Ensuring that all students have access to education and attend school regularly.
- Ensuring that all students have access to a comprehensive, relevant and challenging school curriculum.
- Increasing school retention rates to Year 12.
- Increasing parent participation in the school community.
- Improving attainment and success at school for all student groups.

Catholic Education priorities
- Teaching of the faith in a Christian environment that teaches the 8 Key Learning Areas.
- Providing occasions to practice the faith by participating in services and celebrations.
- Providing occasions where socialisation is available in the contexts of cultural, social and sporting activities.
- Encouraging development of each individual spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically and aesthetically so that they may reach their full potential.
- Respecting the unique worth of each person

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Tasmania: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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Victoria

Geography: 227,420 square kilometres: 3% of Australia
Population: 4,605,000: 25% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students total 177,534 (1999): 34% of all Victorian students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 70% of all Victorian primary schools; Catholic schools are 21%; other non-government schools are 9%. Total primary schools: 1,860 including 164 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 58% of all Victorian secondary schools; Catholic schools comprise 19%; other non-government schools are 23%. Total secondary schools: 538 including 164 combined primary & secondary.

* Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres: 3 with 67 full-time isolated students. In all 4,208 students access these centres either by attending full-time on-site or by enrolling in one or more courses on a part-time basis.

Rural & remote schools		% of total in State
Government	769	49%
Non-government	336	50%
Special Schools	39	41%
Koorie Open Door Education schools	2 in rural locations	

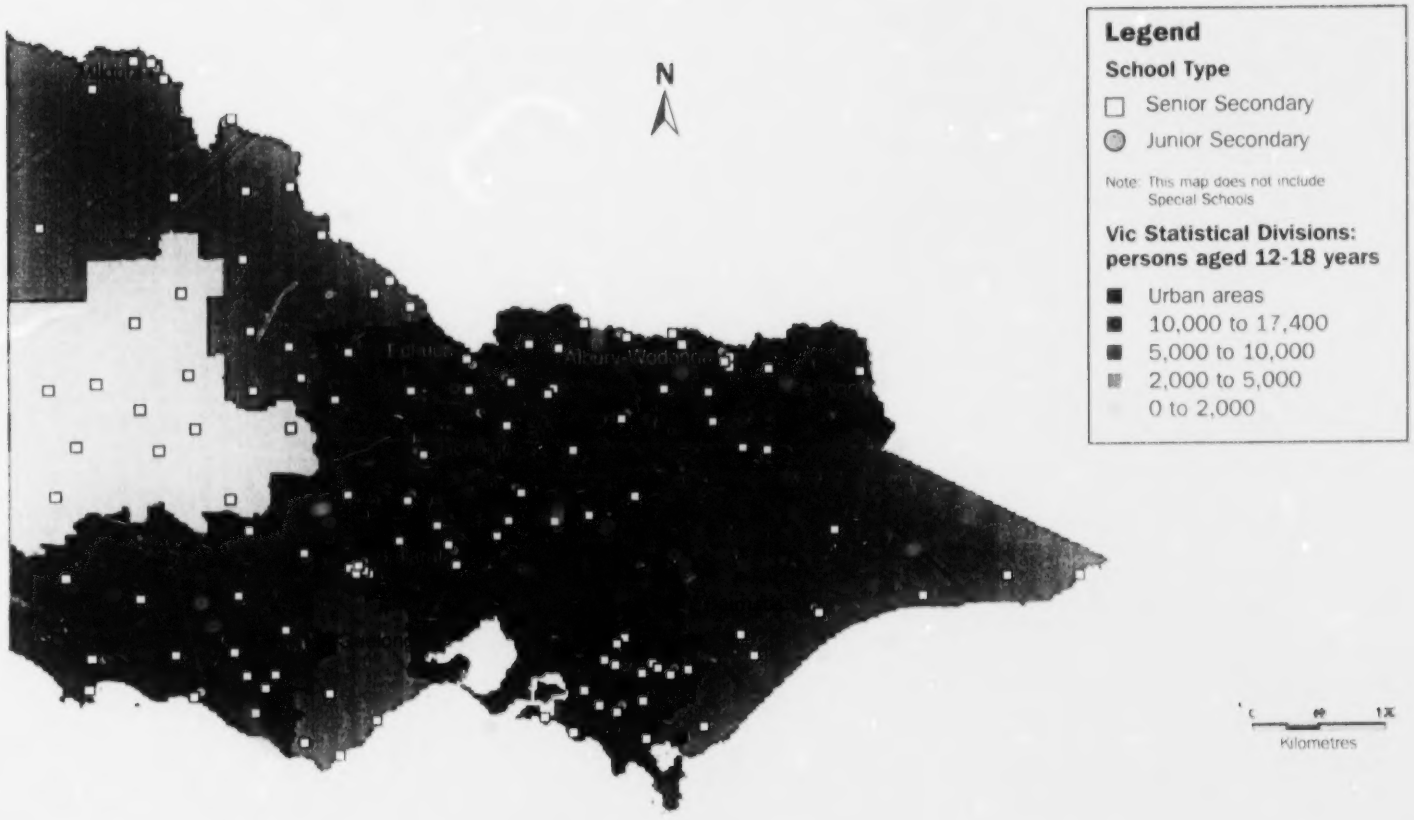
Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all Victorian schools - 1997-98: $4,782

Department of Education, Employment and Training priorities

- Reducing class sizes from the Preparatory Year through to Year 2 to improve literacy and numeracy: aiming for a teacher-student ratio of 1:21
- Improving and extending resources for students with special needs.
- Increasing the Victorian Certificate in Education curriculum options.
- Improving and extending school building infrastructure.
- Improving and increasing information technology in schools.

Catholic Education priorities

- Implementation of the Commonwealth Government's priority objectives in literacy and numeracy, vocational post-compulsory schooling and languages.
- Indigenous education and the education of boys.
- Parent participation, including School Boards.
- Technology for Catholic Schools (TCS) Project.



Victoria: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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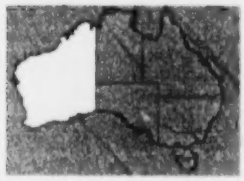
Western Australia



Geography: 2,529,880 square kilometres: 33% of Australia
Population: 1,798,000 (1998): 10% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote government school students total 87,000 (1999): 33% of all WA government school students. Rural & remote Catholic school students total 14,000 (1999): 40% of all WA Catholic school students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 73% of all WA primary schools; Catholic schools are 15%; other non-government schools are 12%. Total primary schools: 829 including 165 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 64% of all WA secondary schools; Catholic schools are 14%; other non-government schools are 22%. Total secondary schools: 300 including 165 primary & secondary.

* Excludes Special Schools.

Distance education centres: 6 with 760 full-time rural and remote students.

Rural & remote schools		% of total in State
Government	342	49%
Non-government	133	51%
Remote Community Schools (govt)	28	100%
Aboriginal Independent Community (non-govt)	14	86%
Special Schools	9	14%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all WA schools - 1997-98: $5,632

Education Department of WA priorities
For rural and remote students and school communities:

- To provide quality education and training.
- To ensure a cross-sectoral partnership approach to the provision of education and training.
- To ensure access to quality education and training professionals.
- To meet the educational needs of students at risk.
- To recognise and support cultural diversity including Aboriginal cultural perspectives.
- To enhance the value placed on education and training by the WA community.
- To resource education and training appropriately.

Catholic Education priorities

- Professional development in small rural and remote schools to implement the Curriculum Framework.
- Improvement of English literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students.
- Professional development for experienced rural and remote teachers in literacy, numeracy, science and information technology.
- Initiatives to attract quality teachers and principals to country schools, including enhanced benefits.

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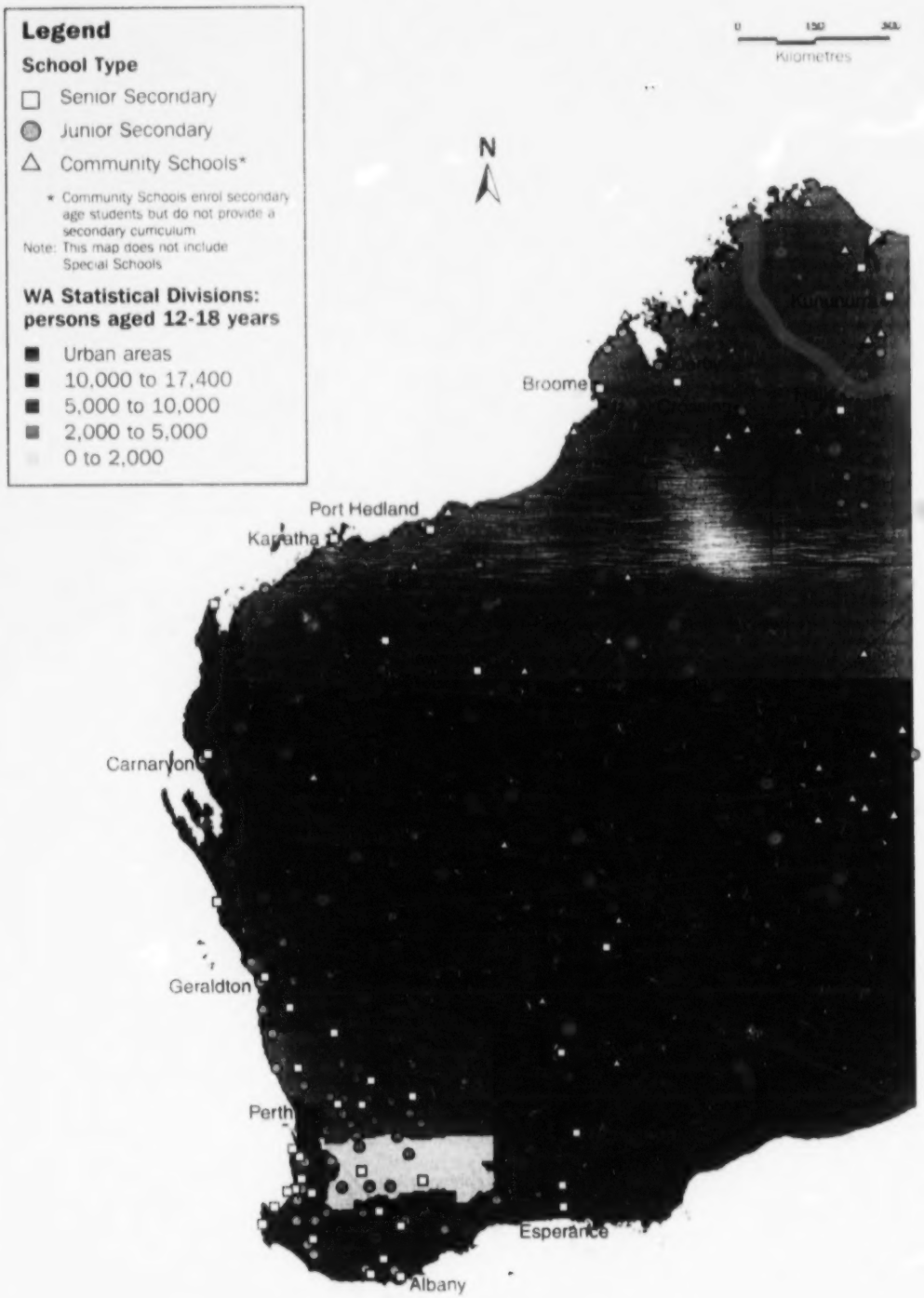

Western Australia: Secondary-age population & secondary school locations

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Ms Barbara Flick (NSW)
Dr Alby Jones (SA)
Lady Pearl Logan (Qld)
Sister Patricia Rhatigan (WA)
Mr Tim Roberts (Vic)

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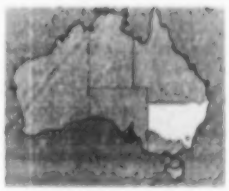
New South Wales



Geography: 800,640 square kilometres: 10.4% of Australia
Population: 6,274,000 (1997): 34% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students total 264,737 (1998): 24% of NSW students

Primary schools*: Government schools are 75% of all NSW primary schools. Catholic schools are 19%; other non-government schools are 5%. Total primary schools: 2,420 including 233 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 59% of all NSW secondary schools; Catholic schools are 21%; other independent schools are 20%. Total secondary schools: 771 including 233 combined primary & secondary.

* Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres: 19 with 6,500 students.

Rural & remote schools		**% of total in State**
Government	1,057	50%
Non-government	740	87%
Special Schools	18	15%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all NSW schools – 1997-98: $5,193

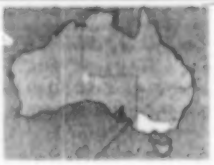
Department of Education and Training priorities

- Improving literacy and numeracy skills.
- Expanding new technologies in learning.
- Increasing options for VET in schools.
- Physical fitness and performing arts.
- Quality teaching.
- Parent and community involvement in schools.

Catholic Education priorities – Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

- Cross-sectoral cooperation between Catholic and government schools.
- Refocussing CAP funding.
- Staffing and staff conditions in rural and remote schools.
- Telecommunications.
- Programs for rural boys.

Victoria



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Distance education centres: 3 with 67 full-time isolated students. In all 4,208 students access these centres either by attending full-time on-site or by enrolling in one or more courses on a part-time basis.

Rural & remote schools		**% of total in State**
Government	769	49%
Non-government	336	50%
Special Schools	39	41%
Koorie Open Door Education schools	2 in rural locations	

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all Victorian schools - 1997-98: $4,782

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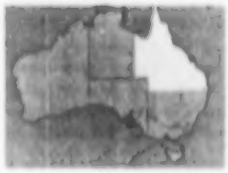
- Reducing class sizes from the Preparatory Year through to Year 2 to improve literacy and numeracy: aiming for a teacher-student ratio of 1:21.
- Improving and extending resources for students with special needs.
- Increasing the Victorian Certificate in Education curriculum options.
- Improving and extending school building infrastructure.
- Improving and increasing information technology in schools.

Catholic Education priorities

- Implementation of the Commonwealth Government's priority objectives in literacy and numeracy, vocational post-compulsory schooling and languages.
- Indigenous education and the education of boys.
- Parent participation, including School Boards.
- Technology for Catholic Schools (TCS) Project.

Queensland



Geography: 1,730,650 square kilometres: 22.5 % of Australia
Population: 3,401,000: 18% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote government school students # total 133,195 (2000): 29% of all Queensland government students.
Data unavailable on non-government students

Primary schools*: Government schools are 76% of all Queensland primary schools; Catholic schools are 15%; other non-government schools are 10%. Total primary schools: 1,410 including 174 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 60% of all Queensland secondary schools; Catholic schools are 18%; other non-government schools are 22%. Total secondary schools: 437 including 174 combined primary & secondary.
* Excludes special schools

Distance education centres: 7 with 6,000 students.

Rural & remote schools		**% of total in State**
Government	1,132	90%
Non-government	240	58%
Special Schools	22	42%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all Qld schools - 1997-98: $5,513

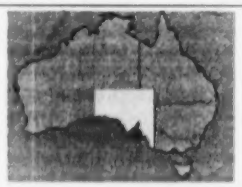
Education Queensland priorities

- Ensuring literacy and numeracy standards in the early years of schooling.
- Providing schools with modern information technology systems.
- Exploring virtual classroom options.
- Improving and expanding VET in schools.
- Developing professional development for teachers.
- Planning for the needs of disadvantaged students.

Catholic Education priorities

- Preparation, recruitment and retention of quality staff for rural schools.
- Ensuring the educational program takes account of the rural background or experience of students and extends their horizons and visions beyond this.
- The needs of rural children requiring distance education.
- Provision of quality residential education appropriate to the needs of rural children.
- Support for the application of technological developments to further the provision of educational services in rural areas.
- Research and development of appropriate ways of providing education for rural children.

South Australia



Geography: 983,480 square kilometres: 13% of Australia
Population: 1,480,000: 8% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students total 58,871 (1999): 24% of all South Australian students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 76% of all SA primary schools; Catholic schools are 13%; other non-government schools are 11%. Total primary schools: 701 including 117 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 66% of all SA secondary schools; Catholic schools are 14%; other non-government schools are 20%. Total secondary schools: 219 including 117 combined primary & secondary.

*Excludes Special Schools

Distance education centres: 2 with 884 full-time students, 491 of whom are full-time country students.

Rural & remote schools	**% of total in State**	
Government	296	48.5%
Non-government	64	33.2%
Anangu schools	7	100%
Special Schools	10	41.7%

Total Commonwealth & State government expenditure per student in all SA schools – 1997-98: $5,363

Department of Education, Training and Employment priorities

- The establishment and maintenance of a Country Service Directorate with direct responsibility for resourcing and supporting country schools and children's services.
- Implementing Partnerships 21 which includes:

1. decentralising decision making at the local school level
2. assessing the resource implications for country schools and recommending action
3. investigating local collaborative strategies to improve employment, education, training and children's services in rural and remote areas.

Catholic Education priorities

- Supporting and providing boarding places and facilities.
- The use of electronic technology to provide access to a range of specialist subject offerings.
- The provision of student welfare and counselling programs.
- The maintenance of local schools when viability is threatened.
- Ensuring that staff provide curriculum balance and flexibility.
- Creative approaches to recruitment and staffing.

- The implementation of programs which foster parent involvement and participation in school communities.

Western Australia

Geography: 2,529,880 square kilometres: 33% of Australia
Population: 1,798,000 (1998): 10% of Australia's population

Students*: Rural & remote government school students total 87,000 (1999): 33% of all WA government school students. Rural & remote Catholic school students total 14,000 (1999): 40% of all WA Catholic school students.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 73% of all WA primary schools; Catholic schools are 15%; other non-government schools are 12%. Total primary schools: 829 including 165 combined primary & secondary.

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Distance education centres: 6 with 760 full-time rural and remote students.

Rural & remote schools		**% of total in State**
Government	342	49%
Non-government	133	51%
Remote Community Schools (govt)	28	100%
Aboriginal Independent Community (non-govt)	14	86%
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For rural and remote students and school communities:

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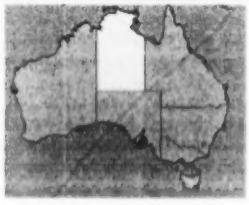


Geography: 1,349,130 square kilometres: 17.5% of Australia
Population: 187,000 (1997): 1% of Australia's population

Students: Rural & remote students[a] total 20,744 (1999): 55% of NT students; 16,991 (82%) attend government schools; 3,753 (18%) attend non-government schools.
[a] Excludes students from the Darwin metropolitan area.

Primary schools*: Government schools are 85% of all NT primary schools; Catholic schools are 8%; other independent schools are 7%. Total primary schools: 157 including 47 combined primary & secondary.

Secondary schools*: Government schools are 77% of all NT secondary schools; Catholic schools are 12%; other non-government schools are 11%. Total secondary schools: 64 including 47 combined primary & secondary.
* Excludes Special Schools.

Distance education centres/campuses: 6 with 528 full-time students and 50 pre-school students.

Rural & remote schools (other than Darwin)		**% of total in NT**
Government	116	82%
Non-government	17	81%
Community Education Centres	19	100%
Out-stations/homeland communities visited by teacher from hub school	55	

Total Commonwealth & Territory government expenditure per student in all NT schools - 1997-98: $8,779

Department of Education priorities

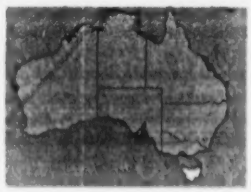
- Developing an Indigenous Education Branch.
- Developing remote multi-purpose early childhood services.
- Establishing cross-sectoral partnerships.
- Piloting 'Self Managing Schools'.
- Linking schools and community libraries.
- Staff recruitment, retention and professional development including increasing the number of ESL recruits.

Catholic Education priorities

- Developing mainstream secondary education in Tiwi schools.
- Improving attendance, retention, literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students.
- Consolidating secondary boarding opportunities for students from remote communities.

- Establishing links with community leaders to improve educational outcomes and work towards localisation.
- Mentor programs for Indigenous education leaders.

Tasmania



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- Respecting the unique worth of each person.